NEW FEATURE IN MIDDLEGAMES • **DANGERS ON THE OPEN H-FILE** • Eduardas Rozentalis

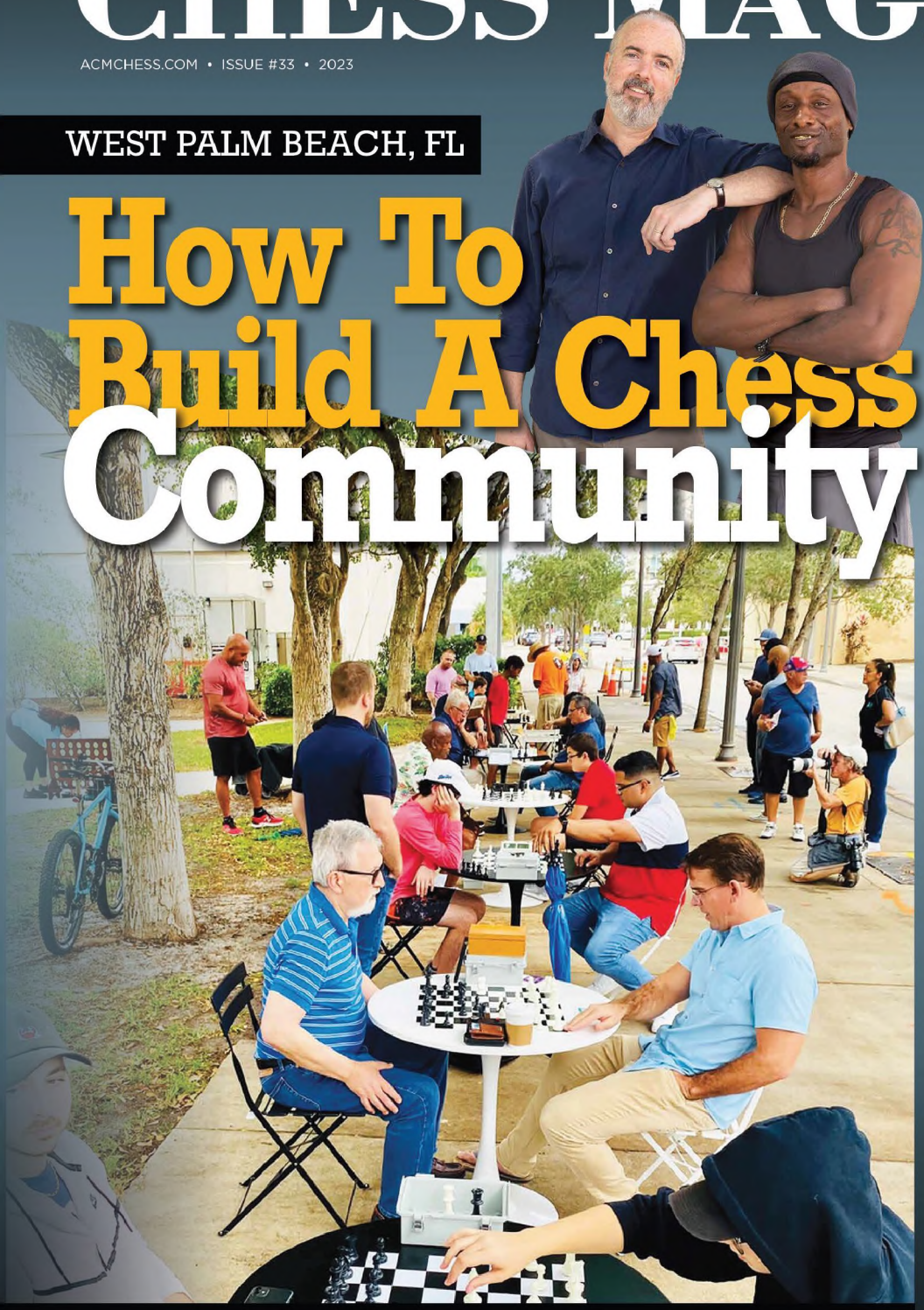
AMERICAN CHESS MAGAZINE

ACMCHESS.COM • ISSUE #33 • 2023

WHERE GREAT MINDS MEET

WEST PALM BEACH, FL

How To Build A Chess Community



HOW TWO MEN UNITED A DIVERSE COMMUNITY THROUGH CHESS

CHESS PSYCHOLOGY
WHY DID MAGNUS ABANDON HIS TITLE?
DR. J. COREY BUTLER

ISSN 2572-2808 02303
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2023 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP MATCH

A KING EMERGES FROM THE MAYHEM

DING LIREN	9½
IAN NEPOMNIACHTCHI	8½

John Burke | Vladimir Georgiev

DING THE KING

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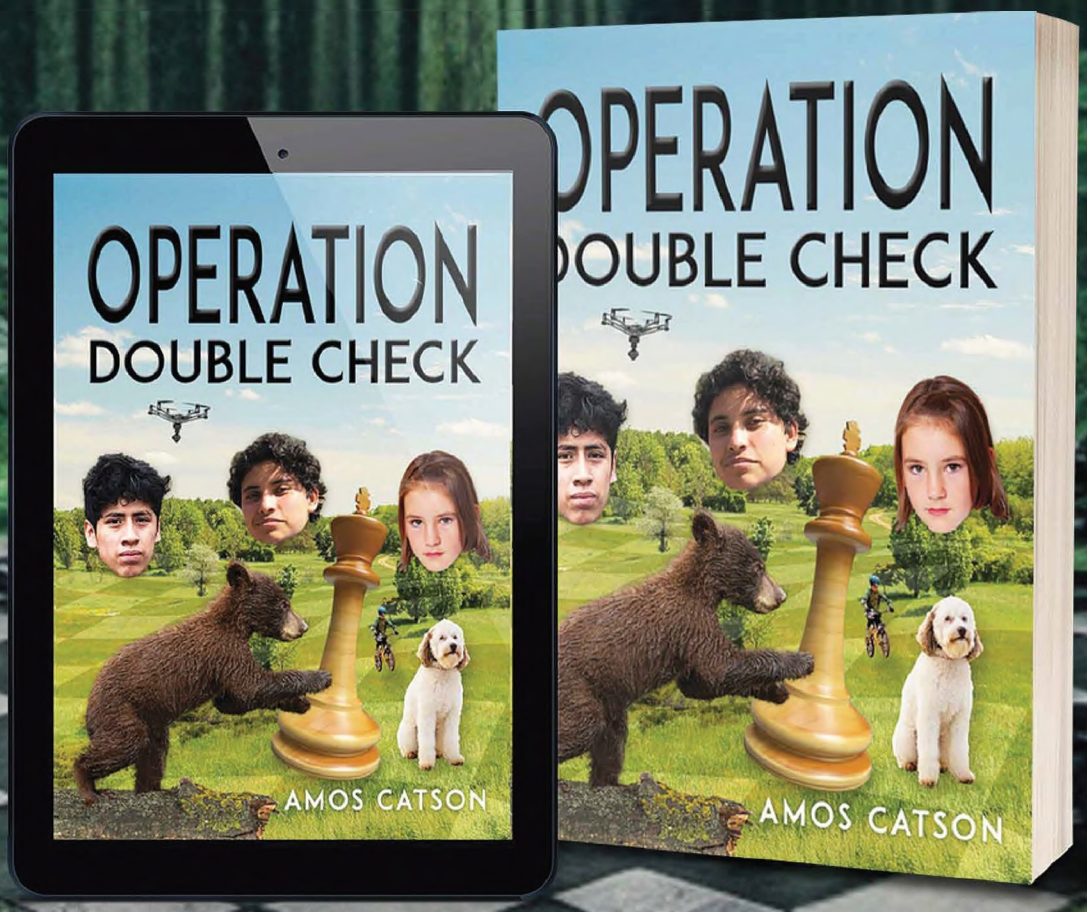

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2023 Grand Chess Tour

CARUANA WINS THE FIRST EVENT, SO SHARES SECOND PLACE

SUPERBET CHESS CLASSIC Bucharest, Romania, *May 6-16, 2023*

Rk	Name	FED	Elo	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Pts	TPR
1	Fabiano Caruana	USA	2764		½	½	½	½	½	1	½	1	½	5½	2836
2	Wesley SO	USA	2760	½		½	½	1	½	½	½	½	½	5	2800
3	Richard RAPPORT	ROU	2745	½	½		½	½	1	½	½	½	½	5	2801
4	Anish GIRI	NED	2768	½	½	½		½	½	½	1	½	½	5	2799
5	Alireza FIROUZJA	FRA	2785	½	0	½	½		0	½	1	1	1	5	2797
6	Jan-Krzysztof DUDA	POL	2724	½	½	0	½	1		½	½	½	½	4½	2761
7	Maxime VACHIER-LAGRAVE	FRA	2741	0	½	½	½	½	½		½	1	½	4½	2759
8	Liren DING	CHN	2788	½	½	½	0	0	½	½		½	1	4	2711
9	Ian NEPOMNIACHTCHI	RUS	2795	0	½	½	½	0	½	0	½		1	3½	2673
10	Bogdan-Daniel DEAC	ROU	2700	½	½	½	½	0	½	½	0	0		3	2638

The 2023 Grand Chess Tour started in Bucharest, Romania, with a 10-player round-robin tournament, held from May 4-16, 2023. After nine rounds of classical chess, American grandmaster Fabiano Caruana emerged as the outright winner of the event - with a +2 score and undefeated! It was certainly a confirmation of Caruana's fine form as he gained 8.9 rating points - which is quite an achievement for such a strong tournament.

The other U.S. player in this event, grandmaster Wesley So, finished in shared second place with a +1 score, and a 4.6-point rating gain.

Carlsen edges out Duda in Poland, So shares third place

The second event of the 2023 Grand Chess Tour was held in Warsaw, Poland, from May 19-26, 2023. Norwegian grandmaster Magnus Carlsen won the tournament with a combined score of 24 points out of maximum 36, demonstrating astonishing blitz skills to edge out the local hero, grandmaster Jan-Krzysztof Duda, who maintained his lead until the last day of blitz, eventually finishing a point behind the winner.

Ten elite grandmasters competed in a round-robin rapid format (G/25+10), followed by a double-round-robin blitz portion (G5+2). The scores for rapid were: 2 points for a win, 1 point for a draw and 0 for a loss, whereas the blitz portion had a standard scoring of 1-½-0.

The most memorable moment of the event happened in the very last round of blitz, when Carlsen had a full point lead and the white pieces against Duda. The game was a full-blooded affair with many missed chances by both players, eventually ending in a draw after 124 moves!

FINAL STANDINGS COMBINED

1. Magnus CARLSEN (NOR) 24
2. Jan-Krzysztof DUDA (POL)..... 23
3-4. Wesley SO, Maxime VACHIER-LAGRAVE (FRA)..21½
5. Levon ARONIAN 20½
6. Richard RAPPORT (ROU)..... 18
7. Anish GIRI (NED) 15
8. Kirill SHEVCHENKO (ROU)..... 13
9. Bogdan-Daniel DEAC (ROU) 12½
10. Radoslaw WOJTASZEK (POL) 11

SEVIAN SHINES IN ARMENIA AND UAE

American grandmaster Sam Sevian had very successful appearances in two consecutive tournaments in Jermuk, Armenia and Sharjah, United Arab Emirates. First, in early May he won the ten-player round-robin Stepan Avagyan Memorial by a full-point margin ahead of his closest rivals, scoring 6 out of 9 and undefeated! The crosstable can be found on page 97.

Then, he continued his undefeated streak in the super-strong Sharjah Masters open tournament (a total of 78 players, all rated 2500 and above!), finishing in shared second place and again scoring 6 out of 9. Two more American grandmasters, Hans Niemann and Grigoriy Oparin, finished on the same score.

Sevian's total rating gain from these two tournaments was 17.9 points, which left him with a June Elo of 2690.

SHARJAH MASTERS, Sharjah, UAE
May 17-25, 2023 (9 rounds)

1. Arjun ERIGAISI (IND) 6½
2-8. Sam SEVIAN, Dommaraju GUKESH (IND), Yu Yangyi (CHN), Haik MARTIROSYAN (ARM), Hans NIEMANN, M. Amin TABATABAEI (IRI), Grigoriy OPARIN 6
9-18. Nihal SARIN (IND), Thai Dai Van NGUYEN (CZE), Nodirbek YAKUBBOEV (UZB), Ivan CHEPARINOV (BUL), S.L. NARAYANAN (IND), Sanan SJUGIROV (RUS), R. PRAGGNANANDHAA (IND), Andrey ESIPENKO (FID), Daniel DARDHA (BEL), Baskaran ADHIBAN (IND) 5½

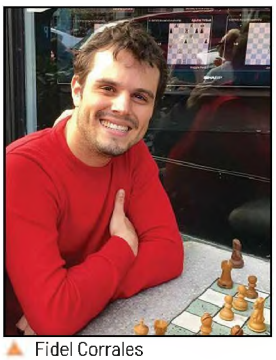
2023 AMERICAN CONTINENTAL

Two Americans qualify for the World Cup

Grandmaster Fidel Corrales Jimenez and 19-year-old IM Josiah Stearman from California, have qualified for the World Cup after finishing third and fourth in the American Continental Championship held in the Dominican Republic from May 15-23, 2023.

Stearman's achievement was even more remarkable as he also gained a GM-norm, won 34.7 rating points, and had the highest average ELO of opponents in the entire tournament. Other American representatives also had significant results, as IM Kirk Ghazarian and GM Gregory Kaidanov both finished shared fourth, but with inferior additional criteria to Stearman.

The winner was grandmaster Georg Meier, who now represents Uruguay after he switched his federation from Germany.



▲ Fidel Corrales

▼ Josiah Stearman

16TH AMERICAN CONTINENTAL CHAMPIONSHIP
Juan Dolio, Dominican Republic *May 15-23, 2023 (11 rounds)*

1. Georg Meier (URU) 9
2-3. Carlos Daniel ALBORNOZ CABRERA (CUB), Fidel CORRALES JIMENEZ 8½
4-10. Josiah STEARMAN, Kirk GHAZARIAN, Cristobal HENRIQUEZ VILLAGRA (CHI), Gregory KAIDANOV, Gianmarco LEIVA (PER), Yago De Moura SANTIAGO (BRA), Jorge CORI (PER) 8

FIDE RATINGS
on June 1, 2023

FIDE Ratings - Top 10 Open			
1	Magnus Carlsen	NOR	2853
2	Alireza Firouzja	FRA	2786
3	Liren Ding	CHN	2780
4	Ian Nepomniachtchi	FID	2779
5	Hikaru Nakamura	USA	2775
6	Fabiano Caruana	USA	2773
7	Anish Giri	NED	2772
8	Wesley So	USA	2765
9	Viswanathan Anand	IND	2754
10	Richard Rapport	ROU	2752

FIDE Ratings - Top 10 Women			
1	Hou Yifan	CHN	2628
2	Humpi Koneru	IND	2567
3	Ju Wenjun	CHN	2566
4	Aleksandra Goryachkina	FID	2557
5	Lei Tingjie	CHN	2554
6	Kateryna Lagno	FID	2552
7	Alexandra Kosteniuk	SUI	2523
8	Tan Zhongyi	CHN	2523
9	Mariya Muzychuk	UKR	2515
10	Harika Dronavalli	IND	2510

FIDE Ratings - USA Top 10 Open		
1	Hikaru Nakamura	2775
2	Fabiano Caruana	2773
3	Wesley So	2765
4	Levon Aronian	2742
5	Leinier Dominguez	2739
6	Sam Shankland	2711
7	Hans Niemann	2695
8	Jeffery Xiong	2692
9	Samuel Sevian	2690
10	Ray Robson	2689

FIDE Ratings - USA Top 10 Women		
1	Irina Krush	2436
2	Alice Lee	2390
3	Carissa Yip	2369
4	Annie Wang	2356
5	Zoey Tang	2348
6	Gulrukhbegim Tohirjonova	2340
7	Anna Zatonskih	2327
8	Nazi Paikidze	2316
9	Rochelle Wu	2306
10	Katerina Nemcova	2305

A NEW CHESS ERA

The principal event over the past couple of months has undoubtedly been the World Championship match in which the protagonists, Ding Liren and Ian Nepomniachtchi, put on a spectacular show with nothing less than six decisive classical games – a memorable testimony to the crowning of a new chess king!

Our regular contributor, GM John Burke, has done his best to highlight each and every decisive game from this exciting match, giving his own viewpoint on the many happenings and might-have-beens that generated the tension which was very much in evidence throughout. John's extensive work is a must-read for every chess fan who wants to rekindle their memories of this action-packed contest. In addition, renowned coach GM Vladimir Georgiev gives his impressions of the critical moments that decided the match, while stressing the importance of the players' teams and seconds.

Magnus Carlsen's abdication from his throne has obviously generated a great deal of controversy – after all, he has dominated elite chess for the past decade. We therefore asked Dr. Cory Butler, a professor of psychology, to offer possible reasons for the former World Champion's decision. Ding Liren is the new chess king – which, together with the rapid rise of a new wave of youngsters, heralds a new era in the world of chess.

Who will come to the fore in this new era I really don't know, but I truly feel that personalities such as Joshua Koehler might become our new unsung heroes. Already in his mid-forties, Josh is proof that it's never too late to get hooked on chess and have the ambition to promote our royal game to the wider community. Imbued with an idea, drive and passion, Josh has already successfully shared his love of chess with local authorities and like-minded residents – to create a unique outdoor chess community in West Palm Beach, Florida, uniting people of different ages, gender, ethnicities and culture.

We at *American Chess Magazine* consider it our mission to recognize and support such a contribution to society by promoting it in our pages. Therefore our Features Editor, FM Alec Getz, introduces West Palm Street Chess, accompanied by wonderful photographs that illustrate the dedication, work and achievements by Josh's team and local chess enthusiasts. Incidentally, our Senior Editor Pete Tamburro will visit this unique venue in early June, hopeful that the example of such an outdoor chess community might be followed all over the United States!

Returning to instructional chess material, we present two interesting articles on openings. GM Emilio Cordova decodes opening trends from the 2023 American Cup, where the country's best players made significant contributions to contemporary opening theory. From a different perspective, Patrick McCartney concludes his history of the Carlsbad pawn structure, started in issue #30, with an elucidation of the approach adopted by the legendary former World Champion Mikhail Botvinnik.

When it comes to middlegames, experienced GM Eduardas Rozentalis shows how a trendy opening can lead to middlegame play with a dangerous open h-file. On the other hand, GM Illia Nyzhnyk continues his work on evaluating chess positions, this time focusing on piece activity and dynamic potential.

Then, in their respective regular columns, firstly GM Jacob Aagaard presents a dozen fresh test positions to enable readers to train together with his best student and one of the top American grandmasters, Sam Shankland. Similarly, by means of selected examples, GM Nikola Nestorovic explains how to deal with threats in chess – after which he challenges the reader to solve six positions on the same theme. Next comes ACM endgame expert, GM Alex Fishbein, who pays tribute to the endgame play of the recently deceased Hungarian GM Andras Adorjan, while GM Sarunas Sulskis again dissects three magnificent games that have attracted his attention.

Once again Andy Ansel delves into his chess treasure trove, this time showcasing Oklahoma's first rated master – D La Pierre Ballard, who once defeated the great Bobby Fischer with the help of an opening idea culled from a Russian chess magazine! This is followed by financial consultant and avid chess player, Luca Barillaro, comparing examples of risk management in finance and chess.

American Chess Magazine #33 welcomes a brand new column on collecting chess sets. A passionate chess collector, Chuck Grau, relives the thrill he experienced when touching history through the sets in his collection. Then on a completely different topic, fans of chess fiction have the opportunity to enjoy reading another absorbing story of chess and love written by Alexis Levitin.

As usual, our Features Editor, FM Grayson Rorrer, documents significant tournaments played both in the U.S. and abroad, while FM Carsten Hansen reviews ten newly published books, and GM Karsten Mueller, one of the world's leading endgame experts, is our guest speaker in 5x5 Q&A.

We now look forward to a summer replete with chess events all over the world. So until our next issue #34 in August, stay tuned!

Yours in chess,
Dusan Krunic, *Managing Editor*

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June 2023

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Ding Liren is the new World Champion

A King Emerges from the Mayhem

DING LIREN 9½ - IAN NEPOMNIACHTCHI 8½

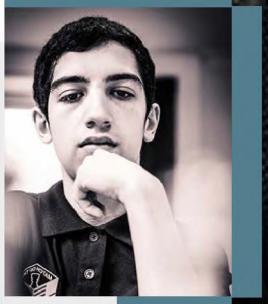
Photos by David Llada, Anna Shtourman, Stev Bonhage

Game by game, bravely weathering a storm of powerful blows and tottering on the edge of defeat, Ding resiliently bounced back. And in the end, after a thrilling turn of events, the decisive knockout was his, thereby securing a hard-fought victory and the greatest chess title of all.

By GM John Burke

In one of the most exciting and unpredictable world championship matches in recent chess history, for the most part Ding Liren found himself on his back foot. Nevertheless, despite Nepomniachtchi's early lead, the players continued to exchange blows with Ding never allowing his opponent to gain more than a one point lead. Indeed, he was able to strike back whenever necessary and leave no doubt about his stamina by winning the very last game of the rapid tiebreak – and with it the World Championship title. The 2023 World Chess Championship between Ding Liren and Ian Nepomniachtchi, played in Astana, Kazakhstan, was one of the most thrilling contests in recent memory. Beforehand, a few clouds hung over the match, as Magnus Carlsen had voluntarily abdicated the throne. Would the match still generate a level of intrigue comparable to the past few World Championship matches?

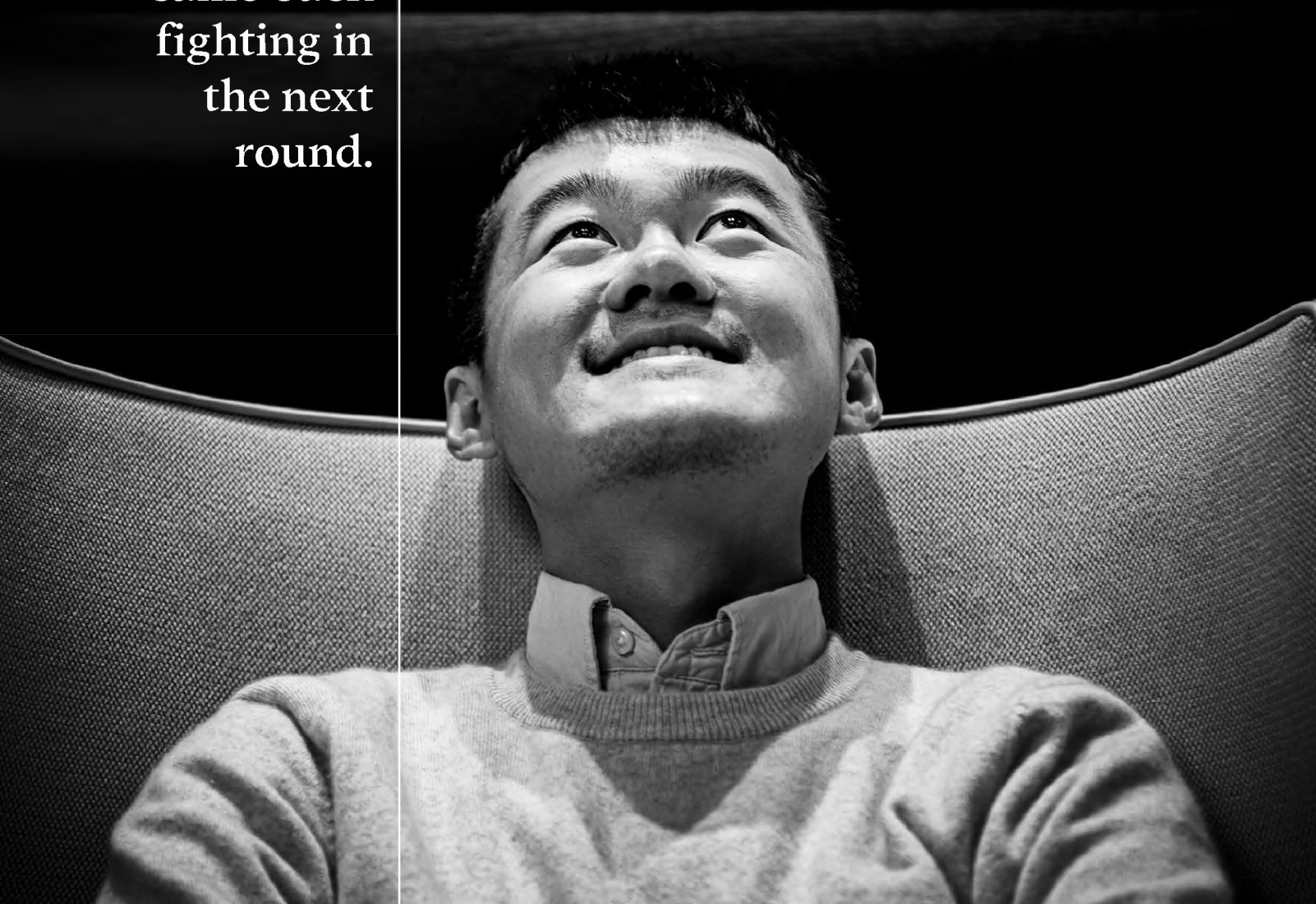
However, once the match started, these questions drifted away, as we were treated to a thrilling battle with six out of the fourteen classical games ending decisively. That's as many as the previous three world title matches combined. Both players displayed moments of brilliance as well as inexplicable mistakes. Ding even managed to make a really bizarre error off the board, as he and his second Richard Rapport played many public training games on Lichess, which was revealed in the middle of the match. It was therefore only fitting that they fought to a 7–7 tie in the classical stage and headed for a four-game rapid tiebreak.



John Burke was the 2020 US Junior Champion. The young grandmaster from New Jersey had already stunned the chess world in 2015 by breaking the record as youngest player ever to surpass 2600+ ELO. John's most notable victories include the 2018 U.S. Masters, the 2018 New York International Championship, and the 2019 Washington International Open. In 2021 he shared first at the Cherry Blossom Classic in Dulles, VA, and also in the World Open in Philadelphia, PA.

DING The KING

No matter how hard he was punched, he always came back fighting in the next round.



RAPID TIEBREAK, GAME 4

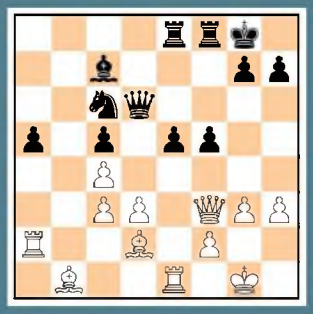
C84

Ian Nepomniachtchi 2795 - Ding Liren 2788

Rapid Tiebreak, World Championship Match 2023

The quality of play in the tiebreak was extraordinarily high considering the stakes, and neither player was able to gain much ground, as the first three games all ended in draws. Then came the fourth game...

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.d3 b5 7.♗b3 d6 8.a4 ♗d7 9.h3 0-0 10.♗e3 ♘a5 11.♗a2 bxa4 12.♘c3 ♖b8 13.♗b1 ♕e8 14.b3 c5 15.♘xa4 ♘c6 16.♘c3 a5 17.♘d2 ♗e6 18.♘c4 d5 19.exd5 ♘xd5 20.♗d2 ♘xc3 21.♗xc3 ♗xc4 22.bxc4 ♗d8 23.♗d2 ♗c7 24.c3 f5 25.♖e1 ♖d8 26.♖a2 ♕g6 27.♕e2 ♕d6 28.g3 ♖de8 29.♕f3



The position looks stable for Black, but it's still slightly uncomfortable to play. White has an annoying idea of playing ♕d5 here, which isn't easy to meet.

29...e4 For a rapid game, I like this decision. The knight will be activated and Black will no longer be pressed for a plan.

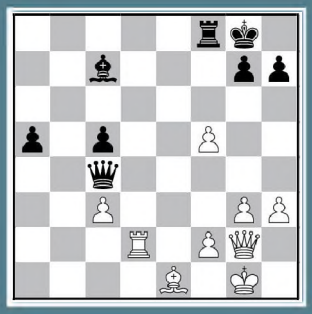
After 29...♔h8 30.♕d5 Black has to trade queens or give away the c5 pawn, neither of which are very appealing.

29...♘e7 is the engine's suggestion, preventing ♕d5 for good, but it looks very artificial to me and I'm not surprised that Ding took a more active approach.

30.dxe4 ♘e5 31.♕g2 White would like to stop ...♘d3 by 31.♕e2? – but this fails tactically to 31...fxe4 32.♗xe4 ♘f3+!.

31...♘d3 32.♗xd3 ♕xd3 33.exf5 ♖xe1+ 34.♗xe1 ♕xc4 Now Black will probably win back the f5 pawn and be doing well in every sense except king safety. His missing f-pawn causes some concern.

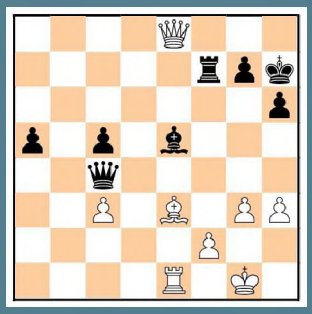
35.♖a1 35.♖d2! is very natural, with the idea of ♖d7, so I'm not sure what Nepo didn't like here.



For example, 35...♕xc3 looks too greedy after 36.♕d5+ ♔h8 37.♕e6, when White's attack is very dangerous.

35...♖xf5 36.♗d2 h6 37.♕c6 ♖f7 38.♖e1 ♔h7 Now Black has stabilized his king position and the game is level.

39.♗e3 ♗e5 40.♕e8

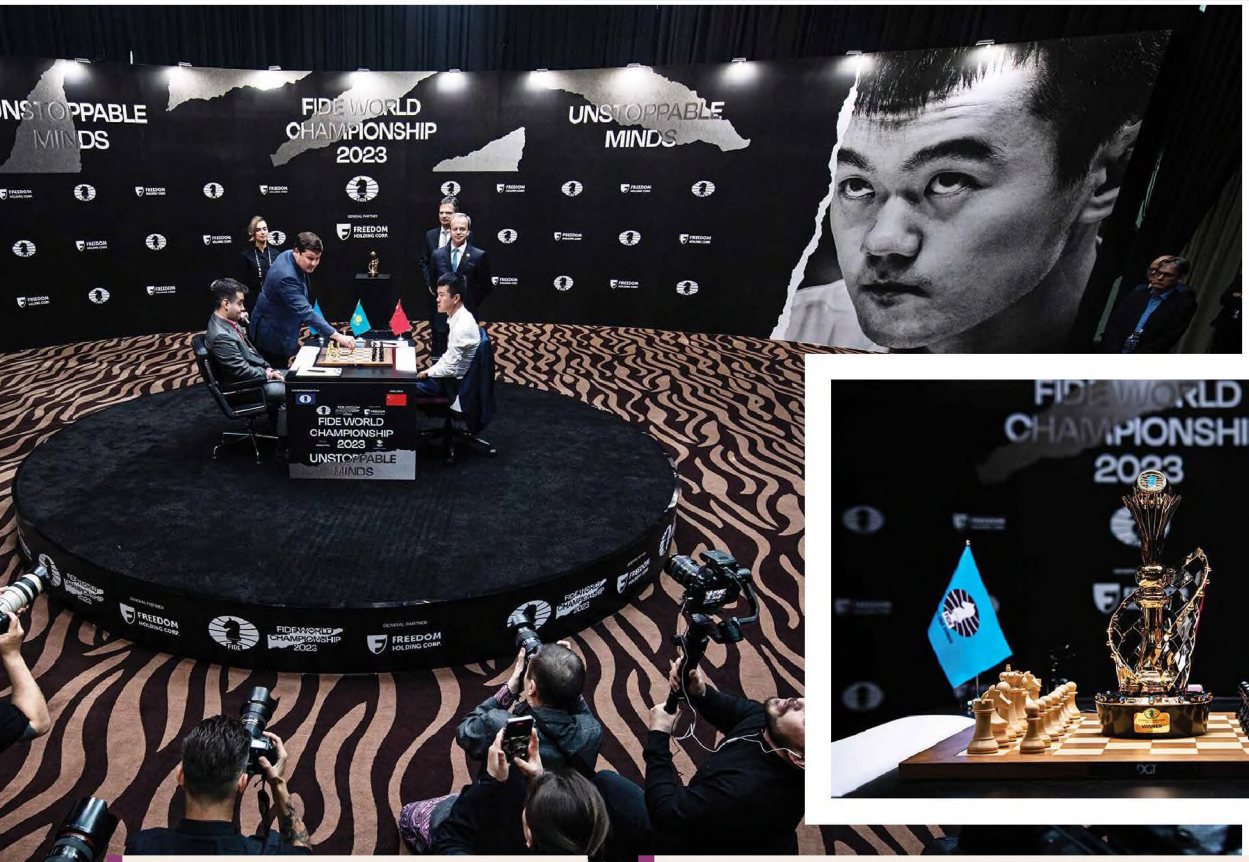


40...♗xc3! Allowing a self-pin is a remarkably brave decision.

41.♖c1 The threat is ♖xc3.

41...♖f6 The only move.

42.♕d7 42.♗d2 ♕d4 43.♗xc3 ♕xf2+ 44.♔h1 ♕f3+ 45.♔h2 ♕f2+=.



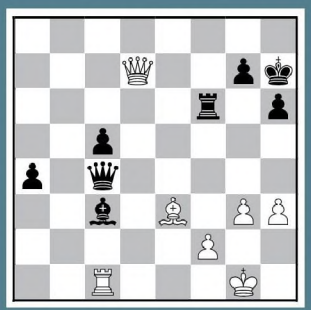
TIE-BREAK

Name	1	2	3	4	Score
Ding LIREN	½	½	½	1	2½
Ian NEPOMNIACHTCHI	½	½	½	0	1½

World Championship Match, Astana, Kazakhstan, *from April 7 to May 1*

Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Score
Ding LIREN	½	0	½	1	0	1	0	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	7
Ian NEPOMNIACHTCHI	½	1	½	0	1	0	1	½	½	½	½	0	½	½	7

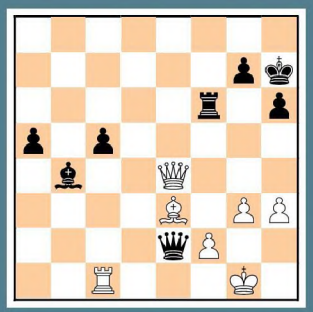
42...♕e2! Another only move! The bishop is immune because of ...♕e1+. After 42...a4 it looks like White has no threat, since ♗d2 is still met with ...♕d4, but White has a beautiful winning move.



43.♕d1! followed by the unstoppable ♕c2.

43.♕d5 ♗b4 Black is up a pawn, but his king is still too exposed to claim any advantage.

44.♕e4+ ♔g8 45.♕d5+ ♔h7 46.♕e4+



46...♖g6! Declining the repetition in this way has been widely praised, but apparently Ding himself didn't consider it anything special. He just thought that it was the objectively best move. In his eyes, his chances of winning the game were greater than losing after this move. It's not super-risky for Black, either, since White has no way to attack the rook

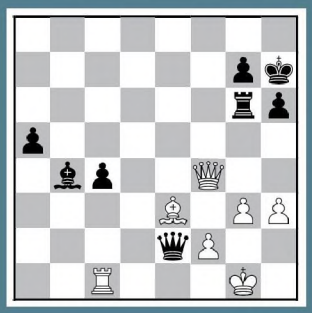
on g6 effectively, as the queen on e2 controls both the d1 square (a possible entry square for White's rook) and the h5 square (a possible square for White's pawn). In the meantime, Black will push his passed pawns, and it's not obvious how White will deal with that.

47.♕f5? Nepo immediately goes wrong. The game can still be salvaged after this, but only with great difficulty. 47.h4 is one of many fine moves for White, then after 47...h5 48.♖c2 ♕d1+ 49.♔h2 the threat of ♗xc5 keeps Black occupied, so he never has time to play ...a5-a4. Following 49...♕g4 50.♕d3 ♔h8 it's time to give back the pawn: 51.♗xc5 ♖c6=. I have the feeling that if the game proceeded like this, we would have quickly forgotten about Ding's ...♖g6 move.

47...c4 Not only does Black get to push his pawn and remove it from attack on c5, but he also prepares to unpin his rook and claim control of the key diagonal by playing ♕d3.

48.h4? 48.♕e4 is the obvious move, but it loses because it steps into a pin. I'm sure this is the first thing Nepo considered, and when he saw it didn't work, he panicked somewhat. 48...♗c5! 49.♖xc4 ♗xe3 50.fxe3 ♕e1+ 51.♔g2 ♕xg3+−+.

Then again, 48.♕f4! is difficult to spot as it's much more natural to stay on the light squares.

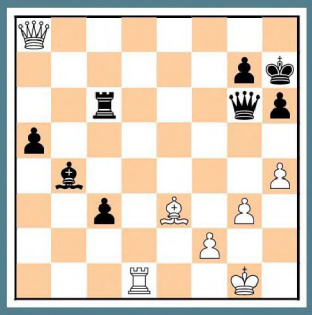


White has to provoke the advance of the c-pawn in order to do away with the ...♕d3 idea. After 48...c3 49.♕f5 White would still be able to hang on.

48...♕d3 49.♕f3 ♖f6 50.♕g4 c3 Now Black has an an extra pawn and complete control, so it should be an easy win.

51.♖d1 ♕g6 52.♕c8 A good last try, going for an all-out attack.

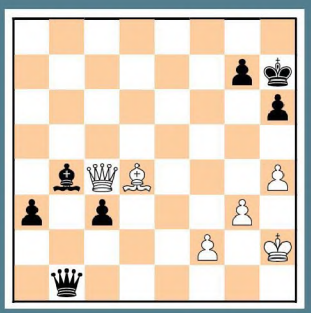
52...♖c6 53.♕a8



53...♖d6? I'm sure Ding suspected that 53...c2 was the best move, and in a classical game he would've calculated it properly, but instead he preferred to play it safe. After 54.♖d8 c1♕+ it must have been 55.♔h2 that Ding feared from afar. He has two queens, but White threatens mate. (*55.♗xc1* makes things easy for Black, since he can force a queen trade right away. *55...♖xc1+ 56.♔h2 ♕c6 57.♖h8+ ♔g6−+*) 55...♕f7! This very calm move is the easiest way to win: 56.♗xc1 ♕xf2+ 57.♔h3 ♕f1+ 58.♔h2 ♖c2+ 59.♗d2 ♕e2+ 60.♔h3 ♕e6+ 61.♔h2 ♖xd2+−+.

54.♖xd6 ♕xd6 55.♕e4+ ♕g6 56.♕c4 Now Nepo is back in the game.

56...♕b1+ 57.♔h2 a4 58.♗d4 a3



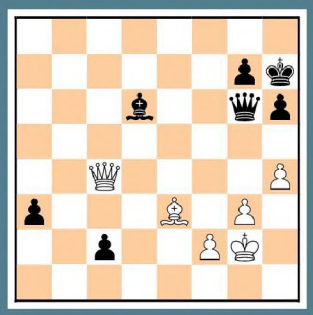
59.♕c7?? This is just a one-move threat − Black can defend against the mate without difficulty.

The surprising 59.♗xg7! is a beautiful try for a perpetual. Although it seems Black should be able to bring his pieces back to defend the king, in fact that's just not possible: 59...♔xg7 60.♕c7+ ♔f6 61.♕c6+ ♔e5 62.♕e8+ ♔d4 63.♕d7+ ♔c4 64.♕f7+ ♔b5 (*64...♔d3 65.♕g6+*) 65.♕d7+=.

I think 59.h5! was a real possibility. White denies his opponent the ...♕g6 defense, and should hold after, for example, 59...♗f8 60.♕f7 ♕d3 61.♗e5 ♕e4 62.♗xc3=.

59...♕g6 60.♕c4 Following 60.♗xc3 ♗xc3 61.♕xc3 a2 Black will continue with...♕b1. The black queen controls the only diagonal along which White could ever give checks.

60...c2 61.♗e3 ♗d6 62.♔g2



62...h5! The last important move, preventing White from ever playing h5 himself. But not 62...♗e5?? (It's never too late to blunder!) as after 63.h5 the black queen will be kicked off the diagonal and c2 will fall: 63...♕f5 64.g4 ♕f6 65.♕xc2+=.

63.♔f1 ♗e5 64.g4 Desperation.

64...hxg4 65.h5 ♕f5 66.♕d5 g3 67.f4 a2 68.♕xa2 ♗xf4 White resigned.

In a way, this game was representative of much of the match. If you nitpick and analyze closely, you can find mistakes, but there was also so much creativity and fighting spirit.

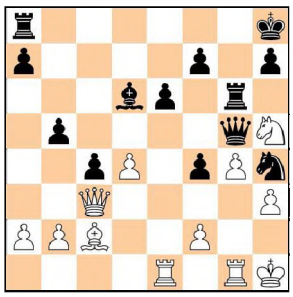
GAME 12

D04

Ding Liren	2788
Ian Nepomniachtchi	2795

World Championship Match, Astana 2023

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 d5 3.e3 c5 4.♘bd2 cxd4 5.exd4 ♕c7 6.c3 ♗d7 7.♗d3 ♘c6 8.0-0 ♗g4 9.♖e1 e6 10.♘f1 ♗d6 11.♗g5 0-0 12.♗xf6 gxf6 13.♘g3 f5 14.h3 ♗xf3 15.♕xf3 ♘e7 16.♘h5 ♔h8 17.g4 ♖g8 18.♔h1 ♘g6 19.♗c2 ♘h4 20.♕e3 ♖g6 21.♖g1 f4 22.♕d3 ♕e7 23.♖ae1 ♕g5 24.c4 dxc4 25.♕c3 b5



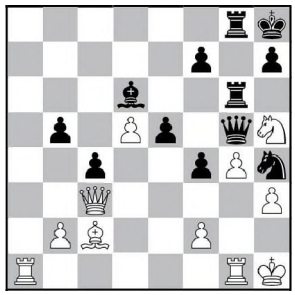
As a matter of fact, for a while it looked like Nepo would wrap up the match in the classical part. He struck first in game 2, after which the players traded blows in games 4-7, each scoring wins with the white pieces. We haven't seen four decisive games in a row in a World Championship match since Kasparov vs. Karpov, 1986, games 16 through 19.

Nepo maintained his one point lead for a while, all the way until game 12, when it looked like he might even win and effectively put the match out of Ding's reach.

26.a4 Nepo has taken over the game, and much of his advantage, besides his extra pawn, is a consequence of White's awful knight on h5. This knight is the reason why ♗xg6 almost never works for White, since Black would just recapture by ...hxg6 and the knight would be doomed.

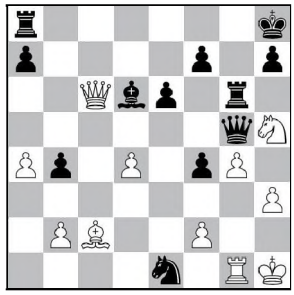
26...b4 Objectively, this is the best move, but it's only good if you see the specific winning sequence that follows, which Nepo clearly didn't.

26...a6 is the most sensible, keeping everything under control. I assume Nepo didn't like the idea of conceding the a-file, but in reality White has nothing. After 27.axb5 axb5 28.d5+ e5 29.♖a1 ♖ag8 it's just lost for White.



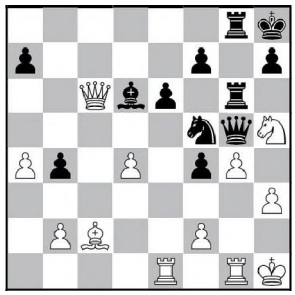
Here's a nice sample line. 30.♖a6 b4! (*30...♕xh5? 31.♖xd6*) 31.♕xc4 ♕xh5 32.♖xd6 ♘f3!−+.

27.♕xc4 ♖ag8? 27...♘f3! 28.♕c6 ♘xe1



29.♕xa8+ (Or *29.♗xg6 ♖d8 30.♗e4 ♕h4*−+) 29...♖g8 30.♕e4 ♘xc2 31.♕xc2 ♕h4! 32.♕d3 f5 33.♕f3 fxg4 34.♖xg4 ♖xg4 35.♕xg4 ♕xg4 36.hxg4 b3 and Black wins because ...♗a3 is coming. Yeah, that's not easy.

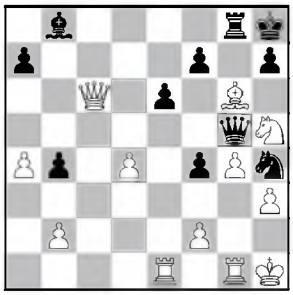
28.♕c6 ♗b8? 28...♘f5! would've been a nice idea, exploiting mating ideas on the g-file to bring the knight into play.



29.gxf5? ♕xg1+ 30.♖xg1 ♖xg1+ 31.♔h2 f3+ 32.♘g3 ♖g2+ 33.♔h1 ♗xg3 34.fxg3 ♖2xg3−+.

29.♕b7? Instead it turns out that 29.♗xg6! wins easily, but I understand why Ding missed it. For a long time this move has been bad for White, since it would just

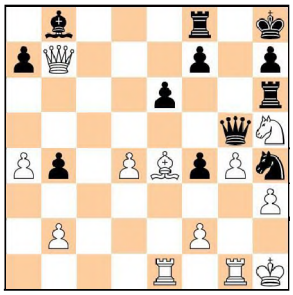
leave his h5 knight trapped. So, at some point, if you're White, you would tend not even to consider this as a candidate move.



If the players were given this position only as an exercise, they would see the win easily, but during the actual game, other psychological factors come into play. If 29...hxg6 White can use the time it takes for Black to take the h5 knight to break open the position. 30.d5 gxh5 (*30...e5* can be met by *31.♘f6+−* now that the queen controls f6.) 31.dxe6+−.

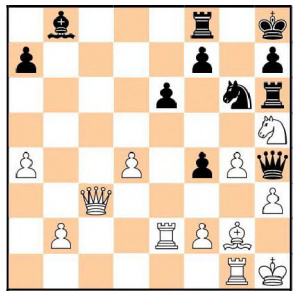
29...♖h6 29...♘f5 would be just as good as it was before.

30.♗e4 ♖f8



31.♕xb4 Now White has consolidated and is up a pawn. Normally, the win would still be quite far off, but Nepo fails to handle the sudden turn of events.

31...♕d8 32.♕c3 ♘g6 33.♗g2 ♕h4 34.♖e2



34...f5?? This is loses outright without any real complications, so the only explanation can be that Nepo simply missed 35.♖xe6.

35.♖xe6 Now White will play d5+, which is deadly since Black can no longer meet it with ...e5.

35...♖xh5 Or 35...f3 36.d5+ ♗e5 37.♖xe5 fxg2+ 38.♖xg2+−.

36.gxh5 ♕xh5 37.d5+ ♔g8 38.d6
Black resigned.

At this critical moment, one of Nepo's weaknesses in the match became very evident – he wasn't willing to sit down and calculate critical lines thoroughly. He relied more on his fantastic intuition, which enabled him to put pressure on his opponent's clock. When it worked, it worked wonders, but when it didn't, it left him open to the criticism of rushing.

On that same theme, game 8 could easily have been a fifth decisive game in a row, but Nepo pulled off one of the most impressive semi-bluffs I've ever seen.

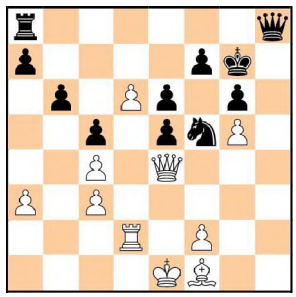
GAME 8

E28

Ding Liren	2788
Ian Nepomniachtchi	2795

World Championship Match, Astana 2023

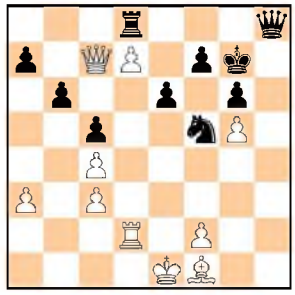
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.e3 0-0 5.a3 ♗xc3+ 6.bxc3 d6 7.♘e2 c5 8.♘g3 ♘c6 9.♖a2 b6 10.e4 ♗a6 11.♗g5 h6 12.h4 hxg5 13.hxg5 g6 14.gxf6 ♕xf6 15.e5 dxe5 16.d5 ♘e7 17.d6 ♘f5 18.♘e4 ♕d8 19.♕d3 ♔g7 20.g4 ♗b7 21.♖h3 ♘h4 22.g5 ♗xe4 23.♕xe4 ♘f5 24.♖d2 ♖h8 25.♖xh8 ♕xh8



Ding has outplayed his opponent with the help of some great opening preparation and could now win immediately.

26.d7? It's tempting to push the pawn automatically, but this gives Black an important tempo to bring his rook to safety. After 26.♖d3! Black just does not have time to deal with ♖h3 ideas. Note that rook on a8 is loose, so Black cannot play a move like ...♕h2 or ...♕h4. 26...♖d8 27.♖h3 ♕g8 28.♕xe5+ ♔f8 29.♖h8+−.

26...♖d8 27.♕xe5+ ♔h7 28.♕h2+ ♔g7 29.♕e5+ ♔h7 30.♕h2+ ♔g7 31.♕c7

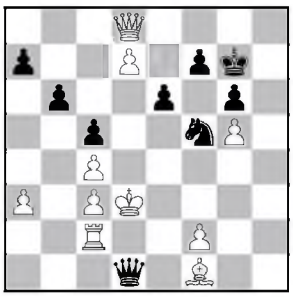


Despite the missed win, it still looks great

for White as Black's pieces are completely tied down and his queenside pawns look doomed to fall.

31...♕h4?! This move should lose, but it ends up saving the game! I call it a semi-bluff since Nepo said afterwards that he did not realize that the move loses until after he played it. Still, it's crazy to me that he could just throw down this move without calculating it fully, and his confidence was such that his opponent didn't bother to calculate it fully either!

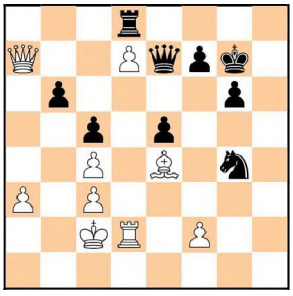
32.♔d1? Remarkably, Ding just believes his opponent. 32.♕xd8 might look like a perpetual, but that's not good enough as an assessment. You have to calculate it precisely. 32...♕e4+ 33.♖e2 ♕b1+ 34.♔d2 ♕b2+ 35.♔d3 ♕b1+ 36.♖c2 ♕d1+ (*36...♕xf1+ 37.♔d2 ♕xf2+ 38.♔c1+−*)



The players probably stopped analyzing here, but White can actually give away his rook with check, which is unusual. 37.♔e4! ♕xc2+ 38.♗d3 ♘d6+ 39.♔e3 ♕c1+ (*39...♘f5+ 40.♗xf5+−*) 40.♔e2 ♕b2+ 41.♔f3+− It's a long line but pretty much forced, and there aren't a lot of branches so it should be discovered by players of this caliber.

32...♕xg5 Now it's a different story. The g5 pawn was restricting Black's position so much, but now that it's gone he might want to start pushing his own kingside pawns up the board.

33.♔c2 ♕e7 34.♗g2 e5 35.♗e4 ♘h6 36.♕xa7 ♘g4

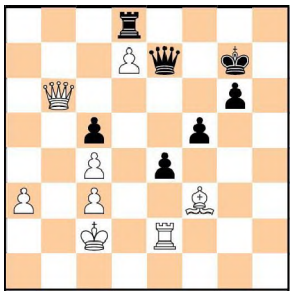


37.♗f3? Another bad decision. Instead of the natural ♗c6, Ding wanted to attack the knight first and then play that move. However, Black does not have to cooperate. After 37.♗c6 White still has every chance of winning the game.

37...♘xf2! If 37...♘f6 then 38.♗c6 which I guess was what Ding had in mind. He wanted to drive the knight back before protecting the pawn. But this is a clear case of thinking too much. In a blitz game he would've played the correct move in one second.

38.♖xf2 e4 39.♖e2 f5 Now Black is in absolutely no danger, as he will take the d7 pawn at last.

40.♕xb6



40...♖xd7 40...♕xd7 looks winning, getting out of the pin and preparing ...♕d1+, but White can save the game with 41.♖g2! when the counter-threat on the g6 pawn maintains the balance.

41.♕b8 ♕d6 42.♕xd6 ♖xd6 43.♗xe4 fxe4 44.♖xe4 After all the excitement, we have a drawn rook endgame.

44...♔f6 45.♖e8 Draw.

As crazy as the second half of the match was, one could almost call it calm compared to the first seven games. We knew we were in for a wild ride after game 2, in which Ding pretty much played a novelty in one of the most common positions in chess.

GAME 2

D30

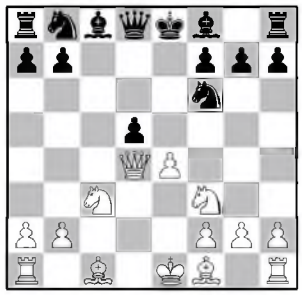
Ding Liren	2788
Ian Nepomniachtchi	2795

World Championship Match, Astana 2023

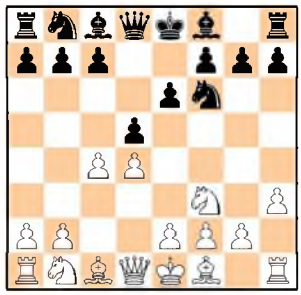
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.h3 The first surprise of the game, and already quite a big one.

4.♘c3 did not appear on the board at all in this match (or even in the Carlsen vs. Nepo one, in fact!), so it's impossible to say for sure what Ian had prepared here. I would wager that 4...c5 is the most likely candidate, with 4...♗b4 also being a possibility. A lot of top players have adopted 4...c5 as Black because it is very direct, and you can analyze deeply to a draw in many variations. For a World Championship match, it is a very sensible strategy to try to kill your Black games as quickly as possible, and try to score points as White. 5.cxd5 (*5.e3* is a way to try to keep pieces on the board, and,

in fact, Ding beat Nakamura from this position in the crucial last game of the Candidates to make it to the final match!) 5...cxd4 6.♕xd4 exd5 7.e4



As far as I know, people discovered you could play 7...dxe4 sometime in 2020, with Wesley So being one of its pioneers. The old main line had been 7...♘c6, but this capture is better. Then, after 8.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 9.♘g5 ♗e6 10.♘xe6+ fxe6 11.♗g5 ♘c6, people have been banging their heads against this endgame for a while, but without much success, and a strong engine will give complete equality here.



The move 4.h3 looks rather pointless, and had never been played by a titled player in a serious over-the-board game before. So, what's the explanation?

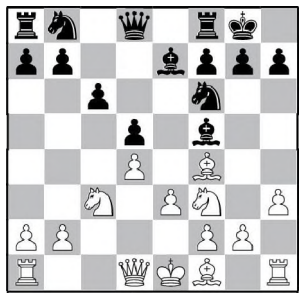
First of all, players at the elite level are so well-prepared, particularly in World Championship matches. Just look at the last Carlsen vs. Nepo match, where Magnus was really not able to get anything out of the opening in any of the games. So, there's something to be said for finding an idea that is rare, playable, and which your opponent likely has not analyzed. By avoiding the mainlines, Ding is trying to fight on his own turf, and rely on the fact that he has analyzed this position after 4.h3 and knows it better than his opponent. Secondly, he is trying to get Ian out of his comfort zone by avoiding some specific variations, which I've shown in the lines after 4.♘c3.

4...dxc4 A very logical approach – Nepo goes for a Queen's Gambit Accepted structure, where White doesn't normally play h2-h3. Ding's argument is that Nepo doesn't normally play the QGA, and he's avoided the 4.♘c3 c5 line.

4...c5 5.cxd5 Now, note that ...cxd4 is senseless, since it does not attack a knight on c3! I would say that this is the main perk of the 4.h3 lines. After 5...exd5, of course, Black can still play a regular Tarrasch a tempo up, but White's argument is that he still gets to play a regular game full of pieces, in a structure he may be more familiar with than his opponent, even if objectively he has no advantage.

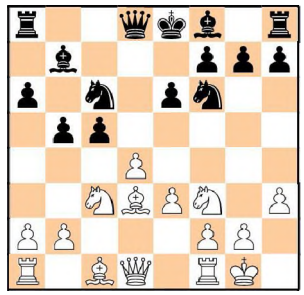
4...♗b4+ With the knight on c3 this would be a Ragozin, a very sound opening which Nepo sometimes plays, but here White can adopt a different approach: 5.♗d2 ♗xd2+ 6.♘bxd2 0-0 7.e3 with a very comfortable, risk-free position for White.

4...♗e7 is a very logical response, especially since Nepo had played this move in classical play against 4.♘c3, winning a nice game against Aronian shortly before the match, at the WR Masters. Then clarifying the structure immediately by 5.cxd5 makes the most sense, since when the bishop lands on f4, the h3 move will serve a purpose, as it gives the square on h2 for the bishop to drop back to if Black should ever play ...♘h5. I would say I "suspect" that Ding would have adopted this approach...but it's all there in the lichess games! 5...exd5 6.♘c3 0-0 7.♗f4 c6 8.e3 ♗f5



9.g4 There were alternatives along the way, but this is one example of a position that Ding was aiming for – very interesting and full of pieces, and not super theoretical or forcing. Fascinatingly, it wouldn't have been the first occurrence of this position in a World Championship match – this was reached in game 22 of Karpov vs. Kasparov 1985. Although Karpov won with the White pieces to reduce his deficit in the match to one point with two games to play, Kasparov went on to win the match and become the youngest world champion in history.

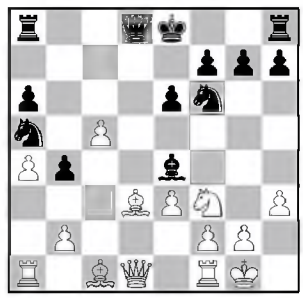
5.e3 c5 6.♗xc4 a6 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.♘c3 b5 9.♗d3 ♗b7 Up to this point both sides have played logical moves.



10.a4 The only way to create any problems for Black – prodding the queenside and trying to create some weaknesses. Without this, Black would develop comfortably and be fine.

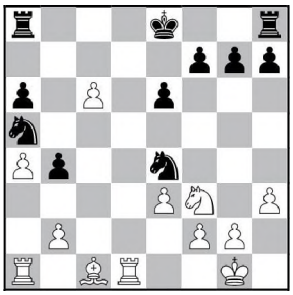
10...b4 11.♘e4 ♘a5! Black wants to trade knights on his terms. In case of 11...♘xe4 12.♗xe4, the bishop on e4 exerts some unpleasant pressure.

12.♘xf6+ Interestingly, Ding had a game against Aronian from a QGA, with the rook on e1 instead of the pawn on h3, and there he continued 12.♘xc5. He probably did not choose that in this game because Black can simplify the position, after which he has a high drawing margin in the resulting lines. 12...♗xc5 13.dxc5 ♗e4! (It should be noted that *13...♘d7* also makes sense, but this is the most accurate.)



A) 14.♗e2 ♕xd1 15.♗xd1 (*15.♖xd1 ♘b3*) 15...0-0-0 Black is very active, and will eventually collect the stranded c5 pawn.

B) 14.♗xe4 ♕xd1 15.♖xd1 ♘xe4 16.c6! Maybe this was worth a shot for Ding, since if Black mechanically recaptures the c-pawn, he would stand worse.



B1) After 16...♘xc6? 17.♗d2, suddenly White is significantly better, as Black's pawns are weak and easy to attack.

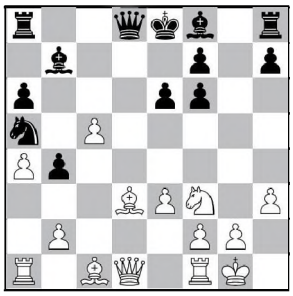
B2) 16...♖c8 is another possible trap that Black could fall into. 17.♖d4! ♘b3 18.♖xe4 ♘xa1 19.♖xb4 0-0 20.♖b6 and Black's knight is way offside.

B3) 16...♘b3! Playing for domination, hindering White's development rather than focusing on material. The c-pawn is doomed in the long run, so there's no rush to take it. 17.♖b1 ♖d8 18.♘d4 ♔e7 None of this is so easy to evaluate, but with accurate play Black is fine. (*18...e5??* doesn't win a piece, due to the intermediate *19.c7+−*)

12...gxf6 A very enterprising move, damaging the pawn structure but preparing to attack on the g-file. Ding admitted that he simply hadn't seriously considered this reply.

12...♕xf6 13.e4 is what Ding was hoping for, with a very dangerous attack. ♗g5 is a big threat. Upon 13...h6 White has many possible ways to proceed – here's one. 14.♕e2 cxd4 15.e5 ♕d8 16.♗f4 ♗e7 17.♘d2 and with possible ideas of ♘e4 and ♕g4 coming, Black has to be careful.

13.e4? I would call this a pretty serious mistake. It's not like White's position is so bad after this move, but it becomes so hard to play once you allow Black to push ...c5-c4 and choke the queenside pieces. 13.dxc5



A) Upon 13...♗xc5 14.e4, White has time to play ♕e2 and ♖e1, and develop comfortably.

B) 13...♕d7! The most accurate move, not giving White time to play e4 and ♕e2.

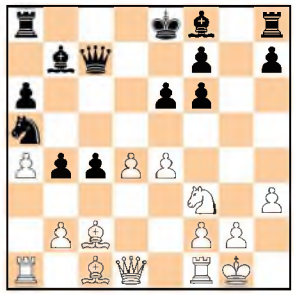
B1) 14.♕e2 is met by 14...♘b3.

B2) If 14.e4, then 14...♖d8 is the point of 13...♕d7 − Black breaks White's coordination just in time.

B3) However 14.c6! is a difficult move in reply − just chucking the pawn back in order to gain a tempo on the bishop. 14...♗xc6 15.♘d4 ♗b7 16.♕e2 After this whole weird sequence, we land in a position which is dynamically equal. Black can try to attack on the g-file, but his king does not really feel safe − maybe it will have to stay in the center for a while.

13...c4! Nepo does not need to be asked twice.

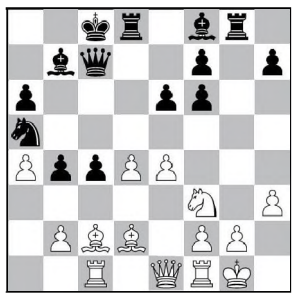
14.♗c2 ♕c7



The problem is that those queenside pawns on b4 and c4, combined with the knight on a5, form some sort of wall. In previous lines, Black had to be nervous about castling queenside because his a6 pawn was weak, and the c-file was open. Now, he has none of those concerns. White will never really be able to organize any breakthrough on the queenside. He will not be able to play b3 under favorable circumstances and, even if he does, ...c3 by Black will likely be a fine reply. Ding probably underestimated Nepo's approach because ...c4 releases the tension in the center, and we're generally taught that maintaining one's central pawns is very important. Here, though, king safety is critical, and White is lacking that.

15.♗d2 ♖g8 16.♖c1 0-0-0 17.♗d3? Again Ding comes up against the "wall" I was talking about before. It's simply impossible to break open the c-file. He probably wanted to transfer his bishop to f1 for defensive purposes, but it doesn't work out concretely.

17.♕e1! was the best way to try to pierce the "wall"

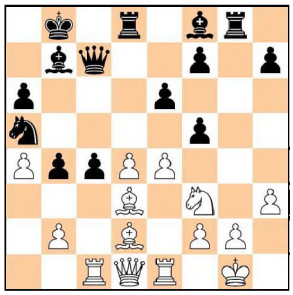


17...f5! is likely what Ding feared, since the f3 knight is undefended now. (Or *17...♕b6? 18.♗d3,* when, with the queen distracted on b6, the c4 pawn suddenly becomes vulnerable.) 18.♔h1 ♘c6 19.♕e2! ♘xd4 20.♘xd4 ♖xd4 21.f3 This is a very weird conception − just giving

up a pawn for apparently nothing. But the knight trade helps White immensely – now that long diagonal is blunted and Black has to start thinking about his own king safety.

17...♔b8 18.♖e1 18.♗xc4 This tactic never works. 18...♘xc4 19.b3 ♘b2−+.

18...f5!



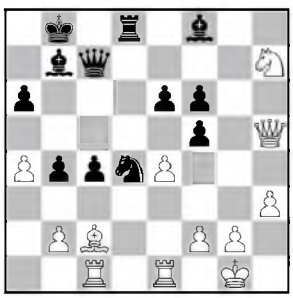
Nepo is relentless. Whenever he feels the dynamic potential of his position, he is extremely strong. He doesn't give Ding a moment to breathe and bring his bishop to f1.

19.♗c2 If 19.exf5 ♖xd4! 20.♘xd4 ♖xg2+ 21.♔f1 ♖xf2+ 22.♔xf2 ♕h2+ 23.♔f1 ♕g2 mate.

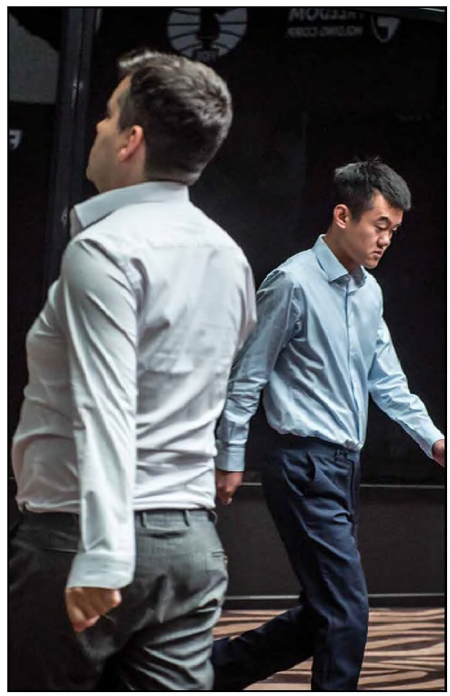
19...♘c6 Now the game is basically over. White's center and kingside are collapsing. He is also light years away from creating any sort of counterplay against Black's king.

20.♗g5 ♖xg5 This move is just screaming to be played. For just the exchange, Black gains a pawn and complete control of dark squares.

21.♘xg5 ♘xd4 22.♕h5 f6 23.♘f3 If you're lost anyway, you might as well grab material and hope that you can escape in one piece. 23.♘xh7

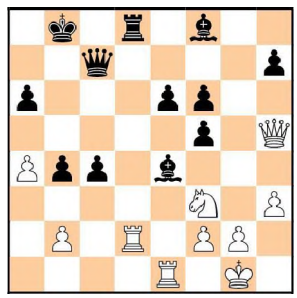


White is still lost in any case, but I feel like this approach gives the best practical chances. 23...♗c5! 24.♘xf6 ♕f4 The



attack is devastating − it's hard to find a sensible move for White that doesn't lose immediately.

23...♘xc2 24.♖xc2 ♗xe4 25.♖d2



25...♗d6! Avoiding the rook trade is the final key. Now ...c3 is coming. Also ...♗xf3 followed by ...♗h2+ is a threat.

26.♔h1 c3 27.bxc3 bxc3 28.♖d4 c2 29.♕h6 e5 The only safe square for the rook is d2, but then the pawn queens, so **White resigned**.

After this game, I heard a GM suggest that Ding was psychologically finished, and that the match would be a bloodbath in Nepo's favor. While, in hindsight, this couldn't have been more wrong, it wasn't so implausible at the time. After all, he had lost his first White game without a fight, in a line that he had studied for months and which his opponent had probably never checked in his life. However, it turned out the fun was only beginning.

GAME 4

A28

Ding Liren	2788
Ian Nepomniachtchi	2795

World Championship Match, Astana 2023

1.c4 Rather than search for something in the Nimzo/QGD complex, Ding goes for the English. Like all good openings, it's been analyzed a great deal, but there's still room for fresh positions, which may be harder to achieve with 1.d4 or 1.e4.

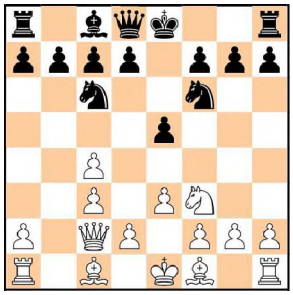
1...♘f6 2.♘c3 e5 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.e3 White has many choices on move 4, including the trendy 4.e4, which was played by Ding in game 10 of this match.

4...♗b4 The main line by far. 4...d5 would be some sort of reversed Taimanov Sicilian structure, but White's extra tempo helps a lot here. After 5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.♗b5 ♘xc3 7.bxc3 ♗d6 8.d4 White handles the structure and stands comfortably − although Black's position is completely fine, the top players rarely go here with Black anymore.

5.♕c2 ♗xc3 Again, by far the main line nowadays. Eventually people decided that it was worth giving up the bishop immediately to stop ♘d5. 5...0-0 6.♘d5 ♖e8 7.♕f5 d6 8.♘xf6+ gxf6 9.♕h5 is one example of an old line with many games. Black is okay, but damaging the pawn structure around your king is not to everyone's taste.

6.bxc3 This is an interesting line that a lot of fighting players have taken up with the white pieces over the years. Even though he is doubling his pawns, Ding is happy to play a relatively non-forcing game with little concrete theory.

Normally, 6.♕xc3 would be a no-brainer. Black just gives up his bishop without any provocation, so why is White not better here? The answer is that Black will castle and probably quickly play ...d5, and the queen on c3 will get kicked around a bit, losing time. One way of playing is 6...♕e7 7.♗e2 0-0 8.0-0 d5 9.cxd5 ♘xd5 10.♕b3 ♘b6. White has the bishop pair, which is a long-term asset, but Black has no weaknesses, and it's not easy for White to break open the position for his own benefit.



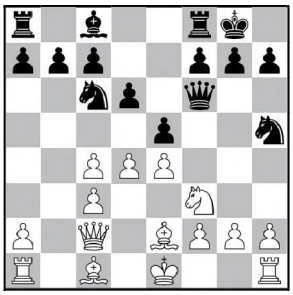
6...d6 7.e4 0-0 8.♗e2 People used to play 8.g3 a lot more, but eventually Black found some good plans against it, including ...a6, ...b5 and ...♗e6, ...♕d7, ...♗h3.

8...♘h5 Not the only move, but the most direct one for sure. It serves two purposes – preparing to play ...f5 and/or to land his knight on f4.

9.d4 Now that Black's knight has abandoned its pressure in the center, this move makes the most sense.

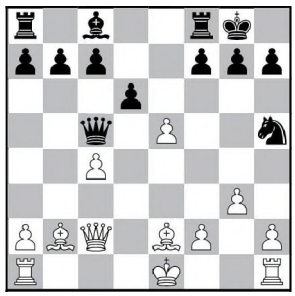
9...♘f4 I don't really understand this move as it just wrecks Black's structure for no apparent reason. That may not be the end of the world, but it seems unnecessary. The only explanation is that Nepo did not feel completely prepared and wanted to avoid the principled 9...♕f6, but if that's the case, then why did he go ...♘h5 in the first place?

9...♕f6 is the most logical continuation, and Ding definitely had something prepared here. Probably he should play g3 to keep the knight out, either before or after playing d4–d5.



A) A lot of correspondence players have played 10.d5, which isn't surprising, since the decision to give up the c5 square feels very "computerish." The whole point is to be able to play g3 without sacking a pawn, even at the cost of giving up all the tension in the center. 10...♘b8 11.g3 ♘a6 12.♗e3 ♗g4 13.♘h4 ♗xe2 14.♕xe2 g6 leads to a strategically complex position. It looks to me like White has the easier long-term plan of playing on the kingside at the right moment. White's doubled c-pawns aren't a big deal at the moment, but in an endgame they could be disastrously weak.

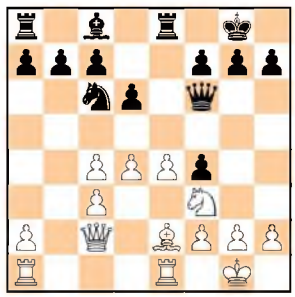
B) 10.g3 is an interesting pawn sac, but Black is fine so long as he isn't intimidated. After 10...exd4 11.♘xd4 ♘xd4 12.cxd4 ♕xd4 13.♗b2 ♕c5 from afar and without preparation, 14.e5!, cutting off the queen's defense of the h5 knight, looks extremely scary.



Nonetheless, Black survives here. 14...g6 15.♕d2 dxe5 16.♗xh5 ♕c6! The key move, gaining a tempo on the h1 rook and shoring up the sixth rank. (*16...gxh5?? 17.♕g5+ ♔h8 18.♗xe5++–*) 17.0-0-0 gxh5 18.♕g5+ ♕g6 19.♕xe5 f6=.

10.♗xf4 exf4 11.0-0 ♕f6 Now White has a free hand in the center and can try to make use of his pawn mass.

12.♖fe1 ♖e8



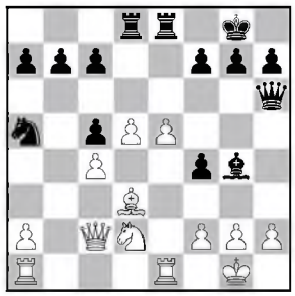
13.♗d3 There's no need to rush matters, I suppose, but 13.c5 was already very interesting. Then after 13...dxc5 14.e5 ♕e7 I like 15.h4! a lot - Black may be fine with accurate play, but it feels like he has to deal with a lot of threats: ♘g5, ♗c4, or ♕e4, followed by ♗d3, which all look enticing.

13...♗g4 The modest 13...♗d7 was the alternative.

14.♘d2 ♘a5!? This removes the knight from the center and hints at the idea that Black will play ...c5 next, thus encouraging White to play c5 himself. This seems like a strange move to encourage, since it looks optically quite nice for White! A waiting game with 14...♖ad8 makes more sense – placing a rook in the center discourages White from attempting any funny business there.

15.c5 There were other moves too, but who could blame Ding for going for this? He gets two pawns on e5 and d5 and strands Black's knight on a5.

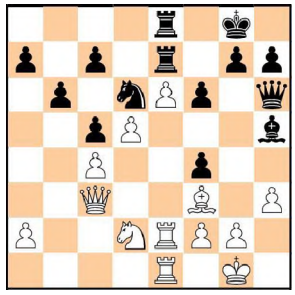
15...dxc5 16.e5 ♕h6 17.d5 ♖ad8 18.c4 On the surface this position looks nice for White – but looks can be deceptive.



The time has not yet come to discount Black's chances just yet. First of all, the stranded knight is only a temporary issue, as he can bring it back to b7 after playing ...b7-b6. Then he can play ...f7-f6 to induce e5-e6, and land the knight on d6, where it will be a useful blockader. Although White's pawns are very nicely placed and choke Black's pieces, he lacks a clear plan to break through.

18...b6 19.h3 ♗h5 20.♗e4 ♖e7 21.♕c3 ♖de8 22.♗f3 ♘b7 23.♖e2 f6 24.e6 ♘d6 After a series of logical moves from both sides, Black has landed his knight on the ideal blockading square, and should now adopt a waiting policy for the rest of the game.

25.♖ae1

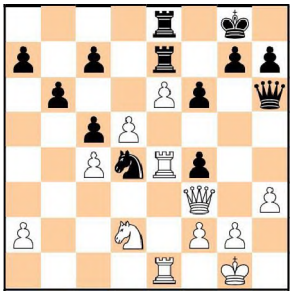


25...♘f5 25...♗g6! is better. A bishop

trade has been available to both sides for the last few moves, but each ignored the possibility. This was probably the last moment when Black could have avoided it, and it makes sense, as e4 is a critical square for White to use to trade off the d6 knight. By keeping his bishop on g6, Black can attempt to ensure that ♘e4 is always met by ...♗xe4 and not ...♘xe4, thereby retaining the strong knight on d6.

26.♗xh5 ♕xh5 27.♖e4 Now there are concrete problems - how to defend the f4 pawn?

27...♕h6 28.♕f3 ♘d4?? This gives the game away in one move. 28...g5 was necessary to defend the pawn. 29.g4 ♘d6 30.♖4e2 still looks nice for White, and he can try to win for a long time to come, but Black is solid and it's not clear if there's any avenue of infiltration.



29.♖xd4! 29.♕xf4? would release all the pressure and play right into Black's hands. Then, after 29...♕xf4 30.♖xf4 c6, with the queens off Black can undermine the pawns freely. But now they feel overextended and suddenly White has to take care not to end up worse.

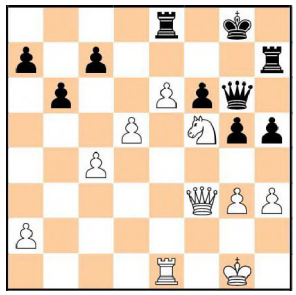
29...cxd4 30.♘b3 In a blocked position like this, a knight is often stronger than a rook. On top of that, White will win the d4 pawn and land his knight on f5 or c6.

30...g5 Black would like to defend the pawn with 30...c5, but it loses immediately after 31.d6!. I guess it's possible that Nepo missed this move in advance, but it must be said that even without this tactic, Black's position is rotten to the core, as White's connected passed pawns completely clog his position. For example, after 31...♖xe6 32.♖xe6 ♖xe6 33.d7 ♖d6 34.♕a8+ ♔f7 35.♕e8 mate.

Therefore, the only explanation I have for 28...♘d4 is that he simply did not consider 29.♖xd4 at all, since it doesn't take long to see that the position is just bad for Black.

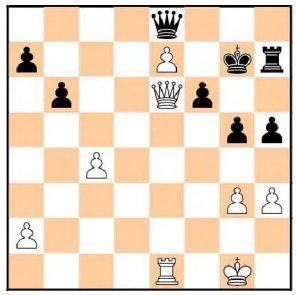
31.♘xd4 ♕g6 32.g4! Best, since f5 is the ideal square for the knight as there it's in close proximity to Black's king and also keeps his queen in a cage.

32...fxg3 33.fxg3 h5 34.♘f5 ♖h7



Black has no counterplay whatsoever and can only await White's pawn breakthrough, whether that be by c4-c5 or d5-d6.

35.♕e4 ♔h8 36.e7 ♕f7 37.d6 cxd6 38.♘xd6 ♕g8 39.♘xe8 ♕xe8 40.♕e6 ♔g7



41.♖f1 It's hard to find a move that doesn't win, but it's important to be accurate until the end and not give your opponent a single chance. This move is best, dragging the h7 rook off the seventh rank.

After 41.♖d1 ♔g6, now ♖d8 doesn't work because of ♕xe7, and Black can limp on.

41...♖h6 42.♖d1 f5 43.♕e5+ ♔f7 44.♕xf5+ ♖f6 45.♕h7+ ♔e6 46.♕g7 ♖g6 47.♕f8 Black resigned.

One possible finish might have been 47...♖g8 48.♕xg8+ ♕xg8 49.♖d8+−.

These two games are examples of a narrative that has persisted around this match, which is that many games were decided by poor play by the loser, rather than brilliant play by the winner. There's some truth to this statement, but I think the next two games (games 5 and 6), which I am about to show, run counter to that view.

Game 5 showed Nepo at his absolute best, and game 6 showed Ding at his absolute best. They won these games in fantastic fashion. While the losing player could have defended better at certain moments, they hardly handed their opponent the game on a silver platter. Of course players make mistakes - if we all played perfectly, every game would be a draw!

However, I invite you take a look at these next two games unbiased, as I think the winning side played terrific chess in each of them.

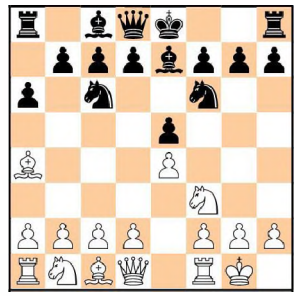
GAME 5

C84

Ian Nepomniachtchi	2795
Ding Liren	2788

World Championship Match, Astana 2023

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7



6.d3 Nepo had tried the sideline 6.♗xc6 in Game 1 and got a promising position, but Ding would surely have checked it out and been ready with an improvement, so there was no sense in repeating it. The 6.d3 line then became a sort of tabiya for the match, appearing in five games (including rapid). Nepo did not venture the move 6.♖e1 at all in the match.

In his match against Magnus, after 6.♖e1 b5 7.♗b3 0-0, Nepo went for Anti-Marshall lines here, such as 8.h3 and 8.a4.

6...b5 7.♗b3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 This is a nice move-order subtlety that has become popular in the last few years. The point is that White can aim to play d3-d4 sometimes, without allowing ...♗g4.

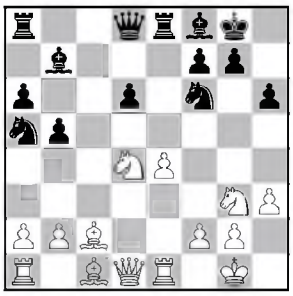
9.♖e1 is the old way of playing, but then Black's typical plan of ...♘a5, followed by ...c7-c5 works perfectly, i.e. 9...♘a5 10.♗c2 c5 11.d4 exd4 12.cxd4 ♗g4 when the pin creates annoying pressure.

9...♗b7 This move is a bit counter-intuitive, since typically the bishop is not that strong on b7 if White has placed his pawn on d3, reinforcing the e4 pawn. The point is that Black is playing against White's potential d3-d4 push. In fact, I myself was on the Black side of one of the important theoretical games in this line, in the 2021 U.S. Championship against Ray Robson.

Following 9...♘a5 10.♗c2 c5 11.d4 ♕c7 12.d5 White is willing to enter into Chigorin structures even though he's lost a tempo playing d3 first, and only then d4. The logic is that the position is very closed and that lost tempo doesn't matter too much.

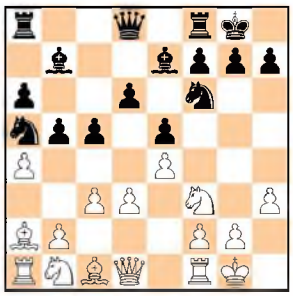
10.a4 A different way of playing compared to the typical ♖e1 and ♘bd2 plans. The point is that the bishop will retreat to a2 when ...♘a5 comes, rather than c2.

10.♘bd2 ♘a5 11.♗c2 c5 12.♖e1 ♖e8 13.♘f1 h6 14.♘g3 ♗f8 15.d4 Again, as is typical in this line, White plays d4 at the optimal moment, even if it means losing a tempo. 15...cxd4 16.cxd4 exd4 17.♘xd4



17...♕c7 was now an important move – the point is that I have ideas of playing ...d6-d5, since White can't play e4-e5 in response as my queen covers that square. 18.♗f4 ♘c4 19.♘df5 ♘xb2 20.♕c1 ♘c4 21.♗xh6 gxh6 22.♘xh6+ ♗xh6 23.♕xh6 ♖e6 24.♘f5 ♘e8 R.Robson 2669 - J.Burke 2554, Saint Louis 2021. Robson went all-in attacking my king, but I have enough pieces on that side of the board to defend. The game was drawn in the end.

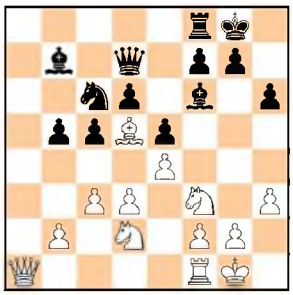
10...♘a5 11.♗a2 c5



12.♗g5 The first new move, and a logical one. White is aiming to take the knight on f6 and apply long-term positional pressure on the light squares.

12...h6 13.♗xf6 ♗xf6 14.axb5 axb5 15.♘bd2 ♘c6 The knight no longer really serves much purpose on a5, as the main reason it moved there was to clear the way for the c-pawn to reach c5 – so it returns.

16.♗d5 ♖xa1 17.♕xa1 ♕d7



The position is equal, but I would say that it's slightly easier to play for White. The only weakness in the position is the d5 square, which is far from being a big deal at the moment, since Black can easily contest it. But there are scenarios in which you could imagine that the position might go wrong for Black. For example, if all the minor pieces were traded except for one of White's knights and also Black's dark-squared bishop, and White had the possibility of landing his knight on d5, then it would probably be terrible for Black.

18.♖e1 The knight is preparing to go to f1 and then e3, eyeing the light squares.

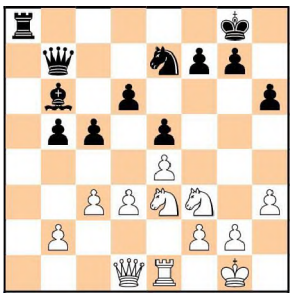
18...♖a8 I wonder if 18...♗c8 would have been a more practical choice. It looks rather bizarre to leave the rook on f8 and not contest the a-file, but the point is that Black wants to play ...♘e7 without trading off his light-squared bishop. Then 19.♘f1 ♘e7 20.♘e3 ♘xd5 21.♘xd5 ♗d8 leaves Black's pieces looking rather passive at the moment, although White has no way to infiltrate, and ...♗b7 will come next.

19.♕d1 The point is that now ...♗c8 still doesn't prepare ...♘e7, since the rook would be hanging on a8. From an objective point of view, basically every move is fine for Black in this position, but sometimes when you look back and analyze a game, you can find certain moments where one side could have made their lives easier from a practical perspective.

19...♗d8 19...♗c8 is a little less effective now, but still worth considering. After 20.♘f1 ♖a7, the rook on a7 stands pretty well, and ...♘e7 is coming again.

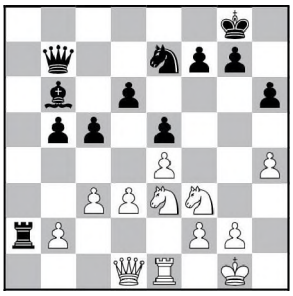
20.♘f1 ♘e7 21.♗xb7 ♕xb7 22.♘e3 Black's position is not disastrous, but now he has no choice but to sit and wait. By trading off his light-squared bishop, he will find it more difficult to defend d5 in the future. The factor that keeps this position equal is that White's f3 knight is not really doing much. If it finds a useful role in the fight for the d5 square, that would spell trouble for Ding.

22...♗b6



23.h4! I like this move a lot as it strives to gain kingside space. 23.♘h4 is a logical move, aiming for ♘f5, but Black has an obvious reply in 23...g6. This is why Nepo wanted to push his pawn to h5 before attempting ♘h4.

23...♕c6!? 23...♖a2! I think Ding should have jumped at the chance to create counterplay. This was the last moment he could have equalized comfortably.



Black's idea is ...c5-c4 in a lot of cases, thereby increasing the scope of his bishop.

A) 24.♕b1 ♕a6 25.h5 c4!

B) 24.♕b3 ♕a6 and with ...♕a4 on the way in order to trade queens, Black is fine.

C) 24.h5 c4! (Not *24...♖xb2?? 25.♕a1 ♖b3 26.♘d2*, trapping the rook and winning.) 25.dxc4 ♗xe3 26.♖xe3 bxc4.

24.h5 Now ♘h4 is coming, followed by ♘f5, so there's no longer time to wait around.

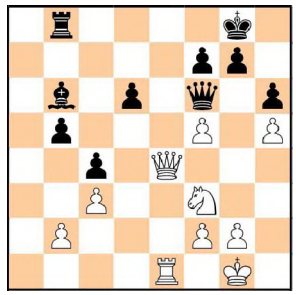
24...c4 25.d4 exd4 White's loose central pawn is poisoned! 25...♕xe4?? 26.♘xc4 ♕c6 27.♘xb6 ♕xb6 28.dxe5+−.

26.♘xd4 ♕c5 Ding wants to prevent a knight from jumping to f5 by pressuring White's f2 pawn. Instead, after 26...♕d7 27.♘ef5, Black's d6 pawn is weak and White is definitely better.

27.♕g4 27.♕f3! would have caused serious problems for Black, as now ...♕e5 can always be met with ♘g4.

27...♕e5 28.♘f3 ♕e6 29.♘f5 ♘xf5 30.exf5 ♕f6? After playing well for the last couple moves, Ding makes a serious mistake. He had to continue 30...♕d7, maintaining control of the light squares, when ♕e4 can always be met with ...d5.

31.♕e4 ♖b8



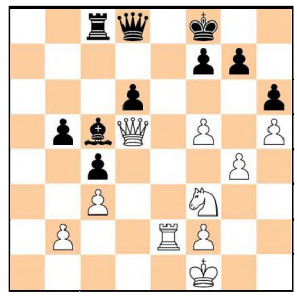
32.♖e2! I cannot heap enough praise on this move. I'm sure it's what Ding missed. It's pure prophylaxis − Black's only idea was to play ...b4. Now that the b2 pawn is defended, White can simply meet ...b4 with cxb4.

Ding was counting on 32.g4 b4!, greatly simplifying the position. After 33.♕xc4 bxc3 34.bxc3 d5! 35.♕xd5 ♕xc3, White is up a pawn, but it's doubled and everything is on the same side of the board, so it should be a draw.

32...♗c5 33.g4 Now a nightmare scenario has arisen for Black − his light-squared weaknesses remain, his king is coming under attack and he has no counterplay at all. The position is still tenable, but it's so hard for a human to defend this. In fact I'd estimate that between two elite players of similar strength, White would win about 80% of the time from here.

33...♕d8 34.♕d5 ♔f8 At some point Black might start thinking about desperately chucking a pawn by 34...b4, just to open lines. Then, although after 35.♕xc4 bxc3 36.bxc3 ♕d7, Black is down a pawn for nothing, at least his rook is now active.

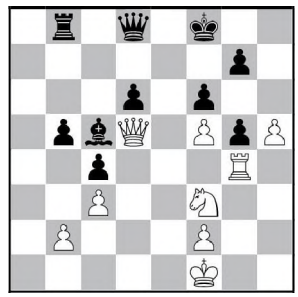
35.♔f1 ♖c8 35...♕c8! was absolutely the last chance. Black has to prepare ...♕b7 to expel the queen. I understand why Ding didn't like this, as it allows f5-f6, but it's a necessary evil. He will not get another chance. Admittedly, following 36.f6 gxf6 37.♕e4 and ♘h4 next, Black's position is just miserable.



36.♖e4! The start of a fantastic conception that is easy to overlook. It still doesn't look like White is threatening anything.

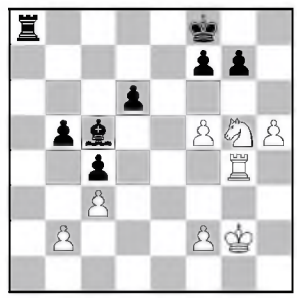
36...♖b8 37.g5 hxg5 38.♖g4 Presumably, only now did Ding see his opponent's idea.

38...♖a8 Instead, after 38...f6



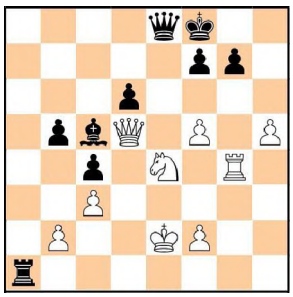
...comes 39.♘h4!! which is easy to miss − otherwise Black would be fine. 39...gxh4 is now met by 40.h6+−.

39.♘xg5 ♖a1+ 40.♔e2 40.♔g2 This also wins. Nepo probably didn't want to allow the queen trade, but White has a forcing sequence to end the game. 40...♕a8 41.♕xa8+ ♖xa8



42.f6! gxf6 43.♘h7+ ♔e7 44.♖e4+ ♔d7 45.♘xf6+ ♔c6 46.♖e8+− The h-pawn cannot be stopped.

40...♕e7+ 41.♘e4 ♕e8



42.♔f3 There's not much that Black can do about the imminent f5-f6.

42...♕a8 43.♕xa8+ ♖xa8 44.f6 g6 44... gxf6 45.♘xf6 ♔e7 46.♘g8+ ♔f8 47.h6+−.

45.hxg6 fxg6 46.♖xg6 ♖a2 47.♔g4 ♖xb2 48.♖h6 **Black resigned**.

Since with ♘g5 or ♔f5 on the way, Black will either get mated soon or the white pawn will get promoted.

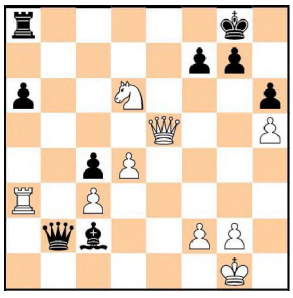
GAME 6

D02

Ding Liren	2788
Ian Nepomniachtchi	2795

World Championship Match, Astana 2023

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 d5 3.♗f4 c5 4.e3 ♘c6 5.♘bd2 cxd4 6.exd4 ♗f5 7.c3 e6 8.♗b5 ♗d6 9.♗xd6 ♕xd6 10.0-0 0-0 11.♖e1 h6 12.♘e5 ♘e7 13.a4 a6 14.♗f1 ♘d7 15.♘xd7 ♕xd7 16.a5 ♕c7 17.♕f3 ♖fc8 18.♖a3 ♗g6 19.♘b3 ♘c6 20.♕g3 ♕e7 21.h4 ♖e8 22.♘c5 e5 23.♖b3 ♘xa5 24.♖xe5 ♕f6 25.♖a3 ♘c4 26.♗xc4 dxc4 27.h5 ♗c2 28.♘xb7 ♕b6 29.♘d6 ♖xe5 30.♕xe5 ♕xb2



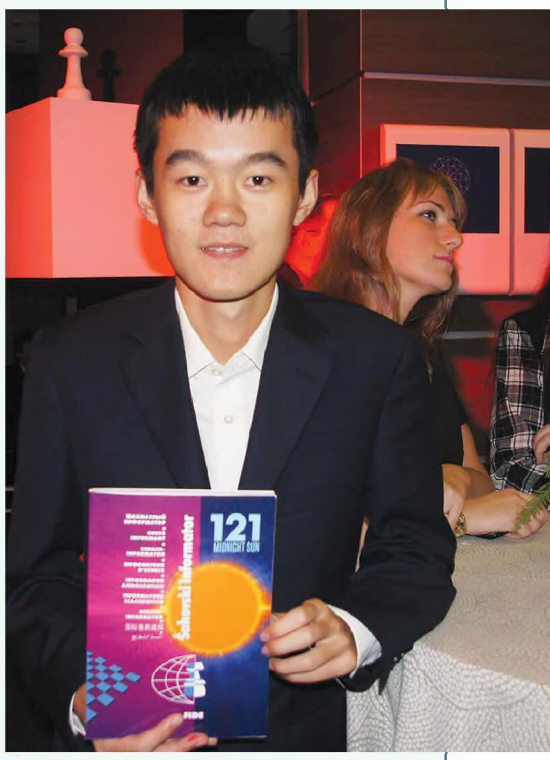
Ding has outplayed his opponent in a London system, and just needs to consolidate and get a solid grip on the position. The only problem at the moment is that Black's queen is very active. However, ♘xc4 wins a free pawn and defends the rook, so that's a no-brainer, right?

Ding Liren and Richard Rapport in 2014

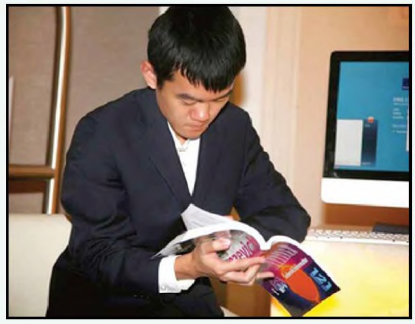
UNVEILING THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN CHESS INFORMANT, DING LIREN'S TRIUMPH, AND THE CREATION OF AMERICAN CHESS MAGAZINE

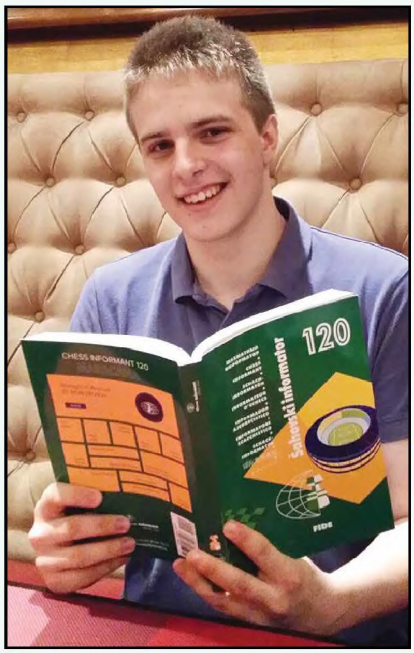
Nine years ago, I gifted Ding Liren a copy of Chess Informant 121, and at the opening ceremony of a big international tournament, he graciously posed for a promotional photograph. Later, I saw him deeply focused on the Informant, paying no attention to the cocktail party around him. That particular volume had annotations and exceptional features by Wesley So and Sam Shankland, among others, and it was clear that Ding was truly passionate about advancing in his chess career. His behavior was reminiscent of Fischer, and I had a strong feeling he would go far in his career. Today, I offer my heartfelt congratulations to him as the new world champion!

If you followed the recent title match between Ding Liren and Nepomniachtchi, you might have noticed Ding's second, the Hungarian grandmaster Richard Rapport, known for his unique playing style. Interestingly, in the same year that I gave Ding Chess Informant 121, I also introduced young Rapport to Chess Informant 120.



Ding Liren, Moscow 2014 *Photo by Josip Asik*





Richard Rapport, Belgrade 2014
Photo by Josip Asik

Did you know that the specific Chess Informant series from 2010 to 2016 (volumes #109-130), which both Ding and Rapport enjoyed, effectively served as the nucleus for American Chess Magazine?

The editors and designers who worked together on Chess Informant went on to create American Chess Magazine, building on their experience to develop something new and exciting.

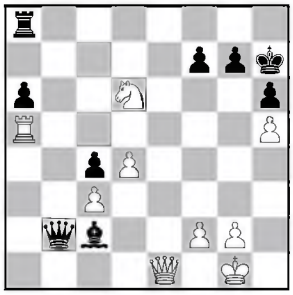
Josip Asik,
Editor, American Chess Magazine

31.♖a5! It's too soon to go for 31.♘e8, as after 31...♖xe8 32.♕xe8+ ♔h7 33.♖xa6 ♕c1+ 34.♔h2 ♕f4+ 35.♔g1 ♕c1+ leads to a perpetual check.

31.♘xc4 would in fact allow his advantage to slip. For example, 31...♕c1+ 32.♔h2 ♗d3 33.♕e3 ♕d1 and Black will take the h5 pawn next and be close to equality.

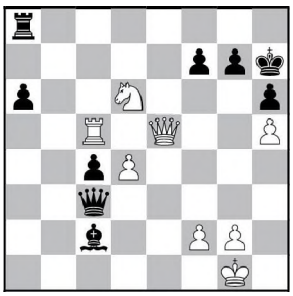
31...♔h7 31...♕xc3? 32.♘e8 Now that Black's queen isn't in position to give a perpetual check on c1 and f4, this just wins. 32...♖xe8 33.♕xe8+ ♔h7 34.♖d5+−.

32.♖c5?! Giving Black another chance. I totally understand why Ding didn't play 32.♕e1!, since it's not very intuitive to remove the queen from a very active square and assign it to a passive role. But concretely, this works out well, since Black can't defend the c4 and f7 pawns.



A) 32...♗d3 33.♘xc4! ♗xc4 34.♕e4+ g6 35.hxg6+ ♔g7 36.♕xa8 and there's no perpetual: 36...♕c1+ 37.♔h2 ♕f4+ 38.g3 ♕xf2+ 39.♕g2+−.
B) 32...♕b3 33.♘xf7.

32...♕c1+? Black really needs to take the pawn with 32...♕xc3. In the game continuation, all his problems remained, and his king was under attack, but at least then he could have maintained material equality. True, White can capture on c4 or go on the attack (with ♘xf7 or ♖c7 for example) but Black is okay.

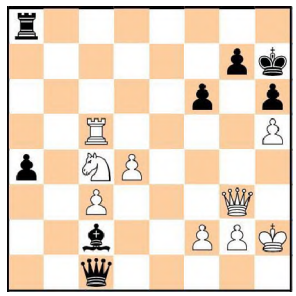


33.♘xf7 ♗d3! 34.♖c7 ♕c1+ 35.♔h2 ♖e8!

Now, if ♕xe8, Black has a perpetual check, starting with ...♕f4+. Granted, none of this was easy to see before ...♕xc3, but I think it was one of those situations where you have to take the pawn and go for it, even if you can't calculate everything. Otherwise, your position is just lost.

33.♔h2 f6 34.♕g3 Now Black's only hope is the passed a-pawn, but he will be too distracted dealing with mate threats to effectively exploit it.

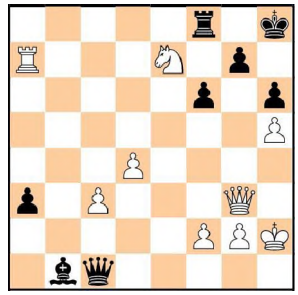
34...a5 35.♘xc4 a4



36.♘e3! An important move, preventing the black queen from returning to g5 in many lines.

36...♗b1 Upon 36...a3 37.♖c7 ♖g8 38.♘d5 ♔h8 39.♖a7+− Black's pawn is contained and White has ideas such as ♘e7.

37.♖c7 ♖g8 38.♘d5 ♔h8 39.♖a7 a3 40.♘e7 ♖f8



41.d5 Not the only way to win, but a nice one. We'll see why controlling the e6 square is so important.

41...a2 42.♕c7 ♔h7 43.♘g6 ♖g8 44.♕f7 Black resigned

♕xg8 is an unstoppable threat, since the black king can't escape to e6! For example, 44...♕g5 45.♕xg8+ ♔xg8 46.♖a8+ ♔f7 47.♖f8 mate.

After this pair of games, the match remained tied at 3–3. We then arrived at one of the most dramatic games of the match. If Nepo had gone on to win the match, this particular game certainly would have been remembered as a turning point.

GAME 7

Ding played the French for the first and only time, forgoing his usual Spanish as Black. Everything seemed to be normal until the clock reared its ugly head.

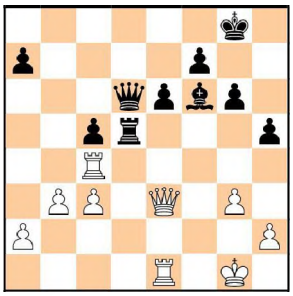
C07

Ian Nepomniachtchi	2795
Ding Liren	2788

World Championship Match, Astana 2023

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 c5 4.♘gf3 cxd4 5.♘xd4 ♘f6 6.exd5 ♘xd5 7.♘2f3 ♗e7 8.♗c4 ♘c6 9.♘xc6 bxc6 10.0-0 0-0 11.♕e2 ♗b7 12.♗d3 ♕c7 13.♕e4 ♘f6 14.♕h4 c5 15.♗f4 ♕b6 16.♘e5 ♖ad8 17.♖ae1 g6 18.♗g5 ♖d4 19.♕h3 ♕c7 20.b3 ♘h5 21.f4 ♗d6

22.c3 ♘xf4 23.♗xf4 ♖xf4 24.♖xf4 ♗xe5 25.♖h4 ♖d8 26.♗e4 ♗xe4 27.♖hxe4 ♖d5 28.♖h4 ♕d6 29.♕e3 h5 30.g3 ♗f6 31.♖c4



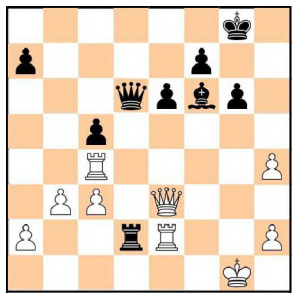
Up to this point, both sides have played an incredible game. They've navigated an extremely complicated position without making any serious errors. Black is down an exchange for a pawn, but his king is much safer than his opponent's. Also, he controls the d-file, while White's rooks are not coordinated. It should be close to equal, but practically, it feels easier to play Black. With 9 minutes left to reach move 40, spectators watched in disbelief as Ding went on to use almost all of his remaining time on the next two moves, leaving himself with less than a minute. This is even worse than it sounds, since there is no increment before move 60!

This can only be explained by nerves, and a strange misevaluation of the position, since at the press conference Ding said that he already felt like the position was going wrong for him, and he spent his time in vain trying to find an acceptable continuation. All I can say is that when you're sitting at the board, under all the pressure of the moment, it's an entirely different world than when you're looking at the computer screen at home. Under normal circumstances, Ding would never feel that Black is in any danger here, but the World Championship is a different creature altogether.

31...h4 Objectively, this is an excellent move, but perhaps it can be criticized for changing the nature of the position before reaching the time control. Maybe Ding should have "marked time" until he reached move 40, and then figured out how to proceed. Now things become concrete.

32.gxh4 ♖d2 This is just a blank shot, giving White an easy reply. Best was 32...♗e5!, when the threat of ...♗xh2+ isn't easy to meet. 33.♕e2 prevents ...♖d2 by keeping an eye on the e5 bishop, but only temporarily. (*33.♖e2 ♗xh2+! 34.♖xh2 ♖d1+ 35.♔g2 ♖d2+−+*) 33...♗f4! This is a nice square for the bishop, and it can be supported with ...e6-e5 if needed.

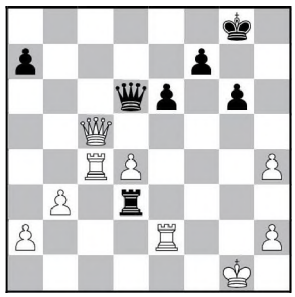
33.♖e2



33...♖d3?? He had to simply go back by 33...♖d5 and cut his losses. Despite the waste of tempi, nothing terrible has happened to Black, and his position is still fine.

34.♕xc5 This is just a free pawn. There's only one idea for Black here, but given that Ding didn't play it, one has to assume that there was not much calculation behind this series of moves − he simply panicked.

34...♖d1+ 34...♗d4+! had to be tried. Though still losing, it's extremely close to working − and it's hard to figure everything out at the board. The point is that it cuts off the white rook's protection of the f4 square. White replies 35.cxd4.



Now Black has two serious tries − ...♕f4, and ...♖d1+ followed by ...♕f4. Both look promising.

A) 35...♕f4 threatens ♖d1+ followed by ♕f1+, among other things. Then 36.♖c1! is the only way to win. (*36.♕e5 ♕g4+ 37.♔f2 ♕f3+ 38.♔g1 ♕g4+=*) 36...♕g4+ 37.♖g2 ♖d1+ 38.♖xd1 ♕xd1+ 39.♔f2 Arriving at a position that looks like it could be a perpetual − but it simply isn't. 39...♕d2+ 40.♔f3 ♕d3+ 41.♔g4 ♕e4+ 42.♔h3 ♕f3+ 43.♖g3 ♕f1+ 44.♔g4 If the queen wasn't on c5, then Black could play ...♕f5 mate! 44...♕e2+ 45.♔g5 ♕d2+ 46.♔f6 ♕f4+ 47.♔e7+− The king finally escapes.

B) 35...♖d1+ 36.♔g2 ♕f4 37.♕e5! Not only defending several key squares, but also threatening ♖c8+ followed by mate.

B1) 37...♕f1+ 38.♔g3 ♖d3+ (*38...♕g1+ 39.♔f4 ♖f1+ 40.♔e4 ♕h1+ 41.♔d3+−*) 39.♖e3 ♕g1+ 40.♔f3 ♕f1+ 41.♔g4 ♕g2+ 42.♖g3+−.

B2) 37...♕g4+ 38.♔f2 ♕xh4+ 39.♕g3 ♕f6+ 40.♔e3+−.

35.♔g2 Now Black has no hope.

35...♕d3 36.♖f2 ♔g7 37.♖cf4 ♕xc3 Ding either flagged or resigned at this point, but in any case White will just trade queens and then take on f7, with a completely winning position.

All in all, as chess fans, I'm not sure what more we could have asked for from this match. Even most of the draws, which we didn't have space to include in this report, were exciting!

One has to feel for Nepo, who lost his second World Championship match in a row, but remember how he bounced back to steamroll the Candidates tournament after losing the match to Magnus. It's still a way away, but I wouldn't be surprised if he managed to do it again.

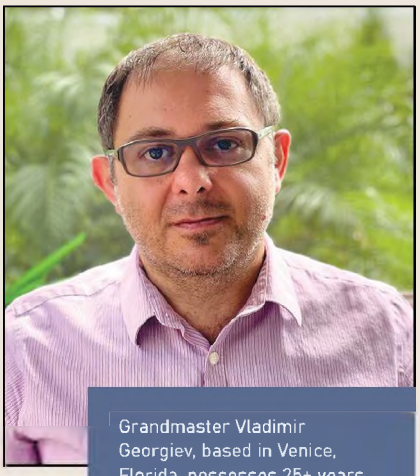
And when it comes to Ding, how could you not admire his fighting spirit? He played in a Candidates tournament which he had originally not qualified for, then got destroyed by Nepo as White in the first round of that tournament. He pulled himself back into contention and won a critical last round game to finish in second place, which ended up being meaningful when Magnus declined to defend his title. He then was behind for most of the present match, and literally took the lead for the first time in the final rapid game. Congrats to him − he earned it fully. There were so many moments where others would have given up, but he never did.

WHAT DECIDED THE MATCH IN ASTANA?

Ding's Restored Confidence

Renowned coach Vladimir Georgiev asserts that the WCC match stands out as one of the most extraordinary in the entire history of Championships. In his analysis, he delves into the memorable moments that unfolded, the ups and downs experienced by the players, their strategic approaches to the match, and the pivotal role of their seconds.

By GM Vladimir Georgiev



Grandmaster Vladimir Georgiev, based in Venice, Florida, possesses 25+ years of coaching experience, guiding world-class players such as GM Jeffery Xiong , who became the World Champion U20 in 2016, and GM Antoaneta Stefanova, the Women's World Chess Champion in 2004. As a player, he achieved championship titles in Bulgaria and North Macedonia, qualified for the World Cup 2007, and earned a silver medal in Calvia 2004 Chess Olympiad.

First, a huge thanks to Magnus Carlsen, since without his decision to withdraw from defending his title, we would never have had the opportunity to witness the greatest match ever for the World Chess Championship!

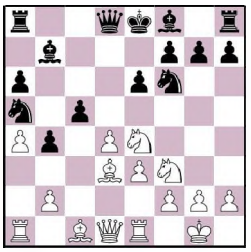
Ding Liren really deserved his hard-earned success and I am impressed with his superhuman willpower. It is important to point out that he had not participated in any strong over-the-board tournaments for the previous three years.

As you may know, China was in total lockdown almost the whole time during the pandemic. Ding was not able to travel or participate in tournaments and was therefore "out of shape". He couldn't even work with his team on his normal preparation for such a big match, because no one wanted to travel to China and risk being placed in quarantine for two weeks the moment they stepped off the plane. So, looking at the whole scenario of being in China, trying to prepare his plan of campaign, remaining focused on his goals and assembling a "chess team" to work with, under trying conditions, it was a wonderful accomplishment to have achieved what he eventually did.

Upon arrival he was rather overwhelmed by his new freedom to go outside, meet his friends and teammates and just enjoy himself. This fact makes it clear that Ding may have had difficulty on concentrating during the early games. In fact, when he first arrived in Astana, he had to change hotels in order to help him regain his chess focus.

Ding's win is a testament not only to his chess skills, but also to his psychological strength and courage to overcome adversity.

As the match progressed, Ding got into his stride and recovered his strength. He got more settled in his surroundings and was able to use his preparation and brilliance to overcome an early defeat. I believe his comeback after the loss in Game 2 was the most important moment in the match.



Ding Liren 2788
L.Aronian 2740
Internet blitz 2021.

12.♘xc5!! ♗xc5 13.dxc5 ♘d7 14.c6 ♘xc6 15.b3 ♕f6 16.♖a2 ♘ce5 17.♘xe5 ♘xe5 18.♗e2 0-0 19.♖d2 ♖ac8 20.f3 h5 21.e4 h4 22.h3 a5 23.♗b2 ♕g5 24.♔h1 ♘g6 25.♗f1 ♘f4 26.♗d4 f5 27.exf5 ♕xf5 28.♖e5 ♕g6 29.♖xa5 ♘xh3 30.♖a7 ♖f7 31.♖xb7 ♖xb7 32.gxh3 ♖d7 33.a5 **1-0**

Ding Liren 2788
Ian Nepomniachtchi 2761
Game 2

12.♘xf6+?? Ding had spent more than 20 minutes on 12.♘xf6+, which was a familiar position to him, and then travelled on a mistaken path. I simply do not understand his decision at this moment. **White lost in 29 moves**, see Page 15.

After this loss I'm certain there Ding suffered a sleepless night. imagine what willpower it took for him to come back from that defeat even stronger and more confident. After all, he was able to equalize the score, even though the chess media had already written him off to lose the match.

Indeed, I think the contest was amazing, because it was essentially a struggle between Ding and Ding himself. From my perspective, it did not look like Nepo played any role in the ups and downs of the match or the craziness during play and when Ding lost on time.

Ding was doing very well up until the unlucky Game 7 (see Page 24). In my opinion he played his best chess in that game. With the black pieces, he surprised Nepo with the French Defense, then outplayed him on his own territory and even allowed him chances to launch an attack.

We all know Nepo is a master of attacking chess which is one of his strongest suits. Ding was bobbing and weaving to avoid Nepo's blows and, despite this fierce attack, he was able to cope with all the problems confronting him. In a genius way Ding then turned the tables on Nepo and was able to gain the advantage. But then, amazingly, without explanation in what was very

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.e3 0-0 5.a3 ♗xc3+ 6.bxc3 d6 7.♘e2

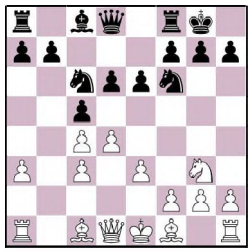
G.Kaidanov 2616 - A.Onischuk 2641
Chicago 2002.

7...e5 8.♘g3 ♖e8 9.♗d3 e4 10.♗b1 b6 11.f3 ♗a6 12.fxe4 ♗xc4 13.♕f3 ♘bd7

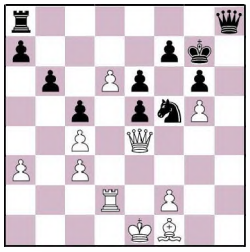
14.♖a2!! ♗xa2 15.♗xa2 ♘f8 16.0-0 ♘g6 17.♗d2 ♕d7 18.♘f5 ♕d8 19.e5 dxe5 20.e4 exd4 21.♘xg7 ♘e5 22.♕h3 dxc3 23.♗xc3 ♔xg7 24.♕g3+ ♘g6 25.♗xf6+ ♕xf6 26.♖xf6 ♔xf6 27.h4 ♖e5 28.♕f3+ ♔g7 29.h5 f6 30.hxg6 hxg6 31.♕d3 ♖ae8 32.♕c4 ♖5e7 33.♕c6 ♖xe4 34.♕xc7+ ♖8e7 35.♕b8 ♔h6 36.♕f8+ ♔g5 37.♗f7 ♖c7 38.♕g7 ♖c1+ 39.♔f2 ♖c2+ 40.♔f3 ♖f4+ 41.♔e3 **1-0**

Ding Liren 2829
Ian Nepomniachtchi 2761
Game 8

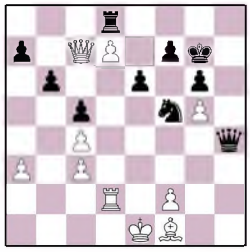
7...c5 8.♘g3 ♘c6



9.♖a2!! A great idea. In this same connection see the game Kaidanov - Onischuk, played about 20 years ago.



26.d7 I believe that now Ding did not even consider 26.♖d3!!, which wins on the spot, since he knew he was still winning with d6-d7 - which is why he played so fast. Also, he was afraid to get behind on the clock.



32.♔d1?? Ding misses winning moves not once but twice, and then overlooks the outright win 32.♕xd8. He played really quickly, spending less than a minute on such an important decision. Instead he should have at least calculated the consequences after ♕xd8, because that could well have won on the spot. Now you can see that Ding was so obsessed not to fall behind Nepo on time that he didn't even attempt to calculate before making such an important decision. **Draw in 45 moves**.

possibly a winning position, Ding mysteriously could not come up with the correct continuation and tragically went on to lose on time. This occurrence is truly unexplainable when we are dealing with someone with his vast experience and superb skills. It is my opinion that the pressure of the match, being for the World Championship and the most important challenge of his life, must have created some disconnect in his thought processes, causing him to freeze in his decision-making.

And so, in such a situation, Ding ultimately lost on time - which could easily have been the penultimate moment in which he completely collapsed.

However, as clearly shown by the course of the match, Ding, with incredible fortitude and great fighting spirit, was able to regroup and finally emerge victorious. This win is a testament not only to his chess skills, but also to his psychological strength and courage to overcome adversity. It should be an example to all chess players, whatever skill or level, that with courage, strength and belief in oneself, one can achieve success on the wonderful and beautiful battlefield of the chess board.

So how did Ding ultimately recover and fight back? I believe that his second, Rapport, played a great deal in restoring Ding's strength and self-confidence, despite missing a win in game 8 (see also Page 14).

A great game that was finished as a draw by Ding but, due to bad time management, he missed a simple win twice. After such a painful game for him, I was surprised that Nepo didn't try to finish the match there and then. I guess he was rather afraid, so decided to just wait for Ding to make other blunders during the match and that would seal the deal. He must have forgotten the old saying "strike while the iron is hot". It seems that Nepo's seconds never informed him that Ding was outplaying him in almost every game. Also that he must try to increase his lead even further.

In the next few games, Ding did not play all that well. He must have decided it was now time for a big fight or the match would be over. Therefore, in game 12, Ding chose a very rare Colle System which would produce a prolonged struggle without forcing opening lines. We can see that the game fluctuated up and down and Ding won nicely after his opponent collapsed under the pressure. Nepo knew he had stood better but he was not sufficiently decisive at critical moments and failed to find a way to increase the pressure on Ding's king. Again, Nepo was outplayed on his own territory.

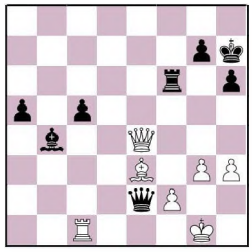
Why did this happen? Was it possible that Nepo's team did not prepare adequately for this match? An unanswered question. The next game Nepo simply drew without a fight, hoping to reach the tiebreak. In the last game, Ding apparently was not sure whether to play for a draw or a win with the white pieces and got into a lot of trouble. Then, surprisingly, Nepo again missed his chances. Finally, after so many exciting

Nepo played too "safe"

Nepomniachtchi is an amazing and wonderfully gifted player so I can't understand why, in what was his second World Championship match, he played for such solid and dry positions when his usual approach to the game is to create highly dynamic positions similar to the great Tal. I simply do not know why he did not play his usual game. As an earlier example of what I mean, in a previous world title match, Anand had prepared sharp dynamic opening play to combat the positional style of the solid Kramnik. I think that Nepo's conservative and "safe" approach, which neither suited him nor was customary for his style of play, was the principal factor why he did not win the world title.

Ian Nepomniachtchi 2795
Ding Liren 2788

Game 4, Rapid Tiebreak



46...♖g6!! It was this move that won the match and represented a great decision by Ding. He continued to follow his strategy and fight on every move. I could well believe that Nepo was hoping for a repetition and, once Ding refused the draw, he was not ready for a continuation of the battle. Ding had in fact caught Nepo off guard and went on to play at full strength right up until the end of the game. **Black won in 68.**

and dramatic encounters, the combatants arrived in the "do or die" tiebreaks.

I believe that Rapport, Ding's second, was a major influence in restoring his man's confidence and it was that confidence that allowed the Chinese grandmaster to make such successful progress in the match and qualify for the final tiebreak.

The tiebreak consisted of four games of rapid chess with the winner being declared the new World Champion. If there was no decisive result, the two players would then contest a series of blitz games to determine the ultimate victor. As it turned out, the first three games all ended in draws, then in the fourth, and ultimately final game, Nepo had the white pieces...

After this thrilling and amazing win, Ding Liren became the new World Chess Champion. His victory was well-deserved after a brilliant and courageous fight against a worthy opponent. Ding played bravely and sharply, with interesting and novel ideas which were converted into dramatic wins.

THE MATTER OF MOTIVATION

Why did Magnus Carlsen Abandon his Title?

Professional athletes constantly pursue their goals, and create new ones as their previous objectives are achieved. At the end of the day, what happens when the new goals are nowhere in sight?

By Dr. J. Corey Butler
Professor of Psychology at Southwest Minnesota State University

In July of 2022, Magnus Carlsen announced that he would not defend his title in the next World Championship match. This was a disappointment to many, but not a great surprise, as Carlsen had already hinted at his intention not to play. According to an article in the *Washington Post*, he stated that he "was not motivated to play another match" and that he felt he did not "have a lot to gain." Over the following months, fans have speculated about his reasons and even debated if he had the right to refuse to defend his title.

Dr. Corey Butler is a social psychologist and chess player. He is Professor of Psychology at Southwest Minnesota State University and lives in Saint Paul, Minnesota. He has published research on the psychology of competitive orientation, physical appearance stereotypes, political attitudes and personality, and interpersonal rejection sensitivity.

Let's focus on his reasons, rather than his rights, and talk about motivation in psychology. Motivation is commonly defined as all forces that energize and direct behavior toward a particular goal. This includes incentives, desires, fundamental needs, personality traits, and innumerable other factors. The classic theory in psychology is drive theory, which suggests that when organisms have a particular need, it triggers a state of tension (think of hunger or thirst) which motivates behavior. Once the need is met, the tension goes away, and the organism returns to a relaxed state of homeostasis.

Abraham Maslow developed this idea further by stating that human motivation exists on a hierarchy, with lower level needs like food and shelter at the bottom and higher level needs like self-esteem further up the ladder. When a lower level need is met, we stop thinking about it and move up the hierarchy. So according to this approach, Carlsen's loss of motivation is easy to understand. Having won the World Championship ten years ago, he proved to the world that he was the greatest player of his time. But the drive to win cannot be sustained indefinitely. It inevitably returns to homeostasis as we look for

Magnus Carlsen posing with fans, 2023 Superbet Rapid Blitz Poland Warsaw *Photo by Lennart Ootes*

higher level needs and other things to do with our lives.

It is sometimes asked, why do people climb mountains? They do it for the thrill and the challenge, and to be able to stand at the peak, which is a clear and objective marker of success. Nowadays people probably do it for the selfie they can take at the peak, so they can post it on social media. But people rarely climb Mount Everest over and over again, unless they are being paid to guide others to the top, and that is an entirely different kind of motivation. Mountain climbing and World Championship matches are time consuming and physically exhausting. Why would we expect Magnus Carlsen to continue trudging, like Sisyphus, up that difficult slope?

The skeptical reader may be wondering, if my explanation is correct, why did Carlsen defend his title for as long as he did? Why do champions sometimes maintain their motivation and persist for many years? Emanuel Lasker comes to mind. Surely my previous answer is too simple and there are other factors at play. Let's turn to what has become one of the most successful and influential theories of motivation in modern psychology, a theory that could be applied to work, school, sports, and possibly every aspect of life. But before we do this, we need to look at a curious set of research findings that started to emerge in the 1970s.

Motivation is commonly defined as all forces that energize and direct behavior toward a particular goal. This includes incentives, desires, fundamental needs, personality traits, and innumerable other factors.

These studies varied quite a bit, but they all followed a common theme. In the experiments, children were given magic markers to play with, college students were asked to solve puzzles, and one experiment even looked at adult blood donors. In every study, participants were randomly assigned to either be rewarded for their performance or to receive nothing. The surprising finding was that rewards tended to reduce subsequent participation in the activity. College students that were paid to solve puzzles became less interested in solving puzzles, once the reward was no longer available. Children given prizes for playing with markers tended to favor other toys and activities when they were observed later in a free-play phase of the experiment.

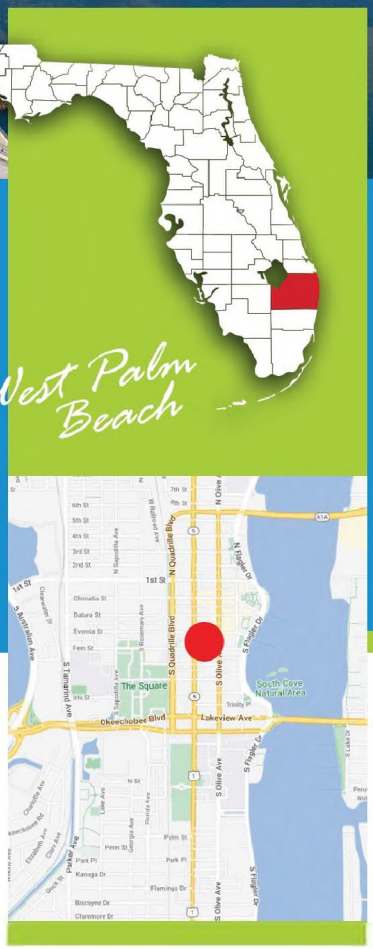
Self-determination theory was developed to understand these findings. The theory proposes that autonomy is a fundamental human need. External rewards, coercion, and constraints all undermine our feeling of autonomy by reducing our sense of free choice and personal control. So when we are paid to do something we formerly loved, we risk transforming our passion into our job. This weakens intrinsic motivation over time, reducing enjoyment and feelings of mastery. This is a problem because psychologists believe that intrinsic motives are absolutely necessary for the highest levels of motivation, creativity, and performance.

During interviews, professional athletes at the height of their careers sometimes report that their love of the game was strongest when they were young and only playing for fun. You may also have noticed that the established GMs hosting the podcast, The Chicken Chess Club, have stated that they don't really enjoy playing chess anymore. And who can blame them when their present situation demands that they focus on extrinsic motives such as victories, prize money, rating points, and reputation? The erosion of intrinsic motivation is a sad paradox of professionalism.

We can see the loss of autonomy described by self-determination theory in Magnus Carlsen's career. He chose to pursue the World Championship and climbed to the summit, winning the title in 2013. Since then he has defended his title several times. Each time he has had no choice over his opponent, or the schedule, or any of the other conditions of the match. It has become nothing but a job for him, with little to gain at this point, but everything to lose. With his intrinsic motivation reduced, perhaps he could be motivated by the money, but he is already a multimillionaire. Instead of asking why Carlsen would abandon his title, perhaps we should be asking, why would he bother to defend it?

WEST PALM BEACH'S POSITIVE EXAMPLE:

CHESS IS OPEN – UNDER THE PALMS



When chess and real life combine they can work wonders – it may start as just an idea but then with some enthusiasm and persistence eventually result in satisfaction and joy for the many! This is how **West Palm Street Chess** was born following an idea by local resident Joshua Koehler.

By FM Alec Getz

Last National Chess Day (the second Saturday in October), the West Palm Beach Downtown Development Authority (DDA) officially opened the Fern Street Chess Park, a modest outdoor space where community members could meet to play chess. And since its inception, this place of shade and palm trees has housed over one hundred regulars. It wasn't always like this, though.

The embryo of chess in West Palm Beach was birthed by a local attorney by the name of Joshua Koehler who spent a sizeable part of his childhood playing chess. But as time went on, he found himself more and more astray from the royal game. As Josh tells me, "I'm a local government lawyer for City Hall and have been doing that for about seventeen years. My connection with chess, however, began in high school with my closest friend. We both went to college in New England and were exposed to the chess at Harvard Square. But although my friend was active then, I never played but always watched."

However, as was the case with many people, the lawyer explains to me, the pandemic reversed this trend: being mostly stuck inside the house, Josh developed a fervent appetite for the online version of the Game of Kings, which rekindled his interest in the world of the sixty-four squares. And so, as the pandemic was nearing its close, he was more than hungry for somewhere live to go and play. Josh elucidates further, "I'm forty-six now and started at forty-four. Even though I happened to find myself in chess late in life. My online playing, combined with my involvement with the DDA, makes me think about chess every hour of every day."

Creating a Street Chess Culture in South Florida

Florida, specifically South Florida, has historically lacked the tradition of outdoor chess in public spaces, a practice prevalent in other parts of the United States. Prominent locations like Washington Square and Union Square in New York City, Harvard Square in Cambridge, the beach in Santa Monica, and the chess parks of the St. Louis Chess Club have long been associated with this cultural phenomenon. However, the absence of such spaces in South Florida is where West Palm Street Chess (the name they chose for their social street chess group and use it for all the social media as well as their website westpalmstreetchess.com -*Ed.*) steps in to fill the void.

With its establishment and activities, West Palm Street Chess introduces a new tradition of outdoor chess to the region. It provides an opportunity for chess enthusiasts and curious passersby to engage with the game in a public setting. By embracing the concept of chess in the street and bringing it to West Palm Beach, the initiative not only offers an opportunity for joy (and pain) but also contributes to the cultural fabric of the community.

West Palm Street Chess bridges the gap that existed in South Florida's chess culture by establishing a tradition of outdoor chess in public spaces. It adds a vibrant and engaging dimension to the community, and enriches the local cultural landscape.

FM Alec Getz was a multi-time national scholastic chess champion and member of the United States Chess Federation's All-American Team. He received the gold medal at the Pan-American Youth Championship and came runner-up in the US Junior Championship. He has all of his International Master norms and enjoys keeping up with the game. In addition to his articles on Chess.com, he has been a published author for Chess Life and currently serves as Features Editor for *American Chess Magazine*.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES PROVIDE RECOGNITION AND SUPPORT

And so, Josh says, when he, the chess enthusiast, asked for help in creating a place to play the royal game outdoors, the DDA did a little research and was able to open the park last fall in time for the chess holiday. Josh was able to get in touch with Raphael Clemente, the director of the West Palm Beach Downtown Development Authority, who also played a major part in creating the park. Raphael tells me a little bit about his role: "I've worked in urban planning for about twenty-five years now with the bulk of it being in the DDA, and I came on board here with the primary responsibility of developing programs and projects that were focused on quality of life and quality of place. With West Palm Beach, we have a growing residential population, and my role has been how we can improve the downtown public realm to be as inviting as welcoming as it could be. I've always sort of worn that hat in the way I think about our job as a special district that serves the downtown area. And we play the role of enabler, helping make these initiatives happen, whether that's with funding or connecting the dots and connecting the idea with a place that would make it happen."

Raphael says that usually he gets his ideas from the community, although he credits Josh with everything for this project. He tells me that when his long-time friend asked him for a favor that was right in line with his scope of work, there was no way that he was going to turn Josh's request down. As Josh explains it, "we were riding our bikes one day

alongside the ocean and we had gone to the downtown area. I said to him, 'it seems pretty straightforward to set up chess parks in the downtown for spontaneous, casual social interaction.' And for Raphael, heeding that suggestion was a no-brainer – he had his staff look at what was the best way to go about it and decided to start with a pop-up park, because outdoor chess tables are an investment, and he wanted to understand if there really was a demand for this park, given we're not Harvard Square or Washington Square or any chess park like that. We don't have that tradition in the same way as an urban area does, but the idea for the chess park came from the DDA as a natural part of their goal which includes promoting the downtown, understanding its mission in the idea of urban placemaking." DDAs, in general, are responsible for marketing the area that they serve, encouraging relocation to the area, beautifying it, and what's known as "placemaking" – gathering spots to bring the community together. And this is exactly what the chess park does. Explaining Josh's role in the park, Raphael continues, "Josh had pointed out to me other cities that had outdoor places where chess was played. And I seem to remember that being on a list of things that we could do to improve public spaces by activating them. I thought that's an interesting idea – let's do a little digging on this one. We found a location that was a great space but wasn't activated, so we reached out to the owners and proposed this idea as a pilot project. We always want to work with the community and get a buy-in first, so we went ahead and did it as a light, quick and cheap approach – as a pop-up. It was a smash hit. And Josh was important in inviting the local chess playing community to participate and come out to embrace the space, which we think was vital to its success and what's kept it going ever since."

Luckily for Josh, the park was situated right on a street corner that got a fair amount of traffic, so people walking in that area stopped by for a while. Josh explains, "as online chess felt more accessible and lent itself to everything great about the game, the next step was to find as many people to play as possible. The pedestrian foot traffic showed immediate interest. We immediately had people stop and talk to us and start to play. We got their contact details and now I have one hundred and thirty-four phone numbers in my directory of chess players, with one hundred percent of them walking by or observing us in a public forum."

WHEN BLACK AND WHITE UNITE!

West Palm Street Chess, and the newly-formed nonprofit group, The Street Chess Coalition Inc, are the results of an unlikely duo: Franklin Rivers and Joshua Pariente Koehler. Franklin and Josh, born in 1977, just five months apart, seemed to have nothing in common on the surface. Their appearances, races, religions, socio-economic backgrounds, levels of education, and professional experiences diverged significantly.

Franklin attended the Pentecostal church and worked to attain his educational degrees later in life, while Josh grew up in a privileged Jewish family that financed his college education. Josh pursued a career as a local government attorney, while Franklin ventured into entrepreneurship as a small business owner. Despite these apparent disparities, their connection through chess unveiled unexpected similarities.

Both Franklin and Josh discovered shared threads as their bond deepened. They learned that both their fathers had served in the Vietnam War, forging a connection through their familial experiences. Moreover, they both harbored a love for creative pursuits like filmmaking and creative writing. The joy of social interaction and the ability to captivate others with their vibrant personalities were also traits they both shared. They each found fulfillment in engaging with new people and drawing them into their world. And both individuals exhibited a deep concern for their community and a desire to serve a purpose larger than themselves. It was through the game of chess that these shared traits came to light. Without this unlikely connection, Franklin and Josh might have never exchanged a single word with one another.

FRANKLIN: 'HEY, YOU PLAY CHESS? COME PLAY CHESS WITH US, WE'RE HAVING FUN!'

JOSH, HE'S A KEY PERSON IN MAKING THIS WHOLE PROGRAM WORK. AND THAT'S WHAT PLACES ALL ARE ABOUT: THE PERSONALITIES, PEOPLE AND STORIES.

IT TAKES TWO FOR SUCCESS

But the park is also what it is today due to the efforts of a man named Franklin Rivers, who's often referred to as the street preacher of chess because of his vibrant personality. Franklin's enthusiasm fueled the whole community in downtown West Palm Beach, drawing ever more passersby to the venue. And thanks mainly to Franklin's efforts, the park boasts the community that it has today and which comes out every week to play. In terms of Franklin getting people to come out to the park and play, Josh explains that "Franklin is vocal and didn't have any reservation in engaging the person on the street to say, 'hey, you play chess? Come play chess with us, were having fun!' he was constantly promoting it. The guy's a leader."

Raphael chimes in, "The guy's a ball of energy and a showman – like Josh, he's a key person in making this whole program work. And that's what places all are about: the personalities, people and stories."

Franklin learned chess from his uncle but didn't have the resources in chess that more privileged people had, so he spent time at the local recreation center. Franklin was never athletic, so chess suited him perfectly. In off time from his job at a cleaning service, he spent time at the park, where he attempted to create the diverse chess community he didn't have growing up. As Franklin tells, "my job is building what we started, getting people to come out here and play, spreading the message and letting people know it's a joyful environment that will not only enhance your skills but also allow you to network and meet people from all walks of life. My vision for the park overall is to build a chess social club and have people from all walks of life come in and experience what West Palm Beach has to offer. We have regulars come on a weekly basis, on any given day the regulars are about ten to fifteen people, but we also have thirty to forty people walking up, which is great. And when you play outside it's a different form of energy – we're not quiet. We're talking and laughing, and there's so much going on. It's a whole different ballgame."

CONTAGIOUS POSITIVITY FOR A SNOWBALL EFFECT

In May 2022, Josh had the opportunity to meet Franklin at the future site of Fern Street Chess Park. Setting up a couple of foldout tables, Josh extended an open invitation through Nextdoor.com, inviting local chess enthusiasts to gather and test the potential location. Franklin, along with a few others, responded to the invitation and attended the event. Immediately, Josh recognized Franklin's vibrant personality - a force of nature that effortlessly made strangers feel like lifelong friends.

As Franklin played his first game against another skilled player, his enthusiasm overflowed. He exclaimed with excitement, declaring that this was the billed matchup of the day: "This is it! This is it! This is the matchup! Oh my god!" Josh assumed that Franklin and the other player were already acquainted, but to his surprise, they were not. Intrigued by their encounter, Josh returned home and shared the story with his wife, Jill. Strangely enough, Jill found Franklin's name familiar and decided to check her Nextdoor.com feed. There, she confirmed that Franklin was indeed the person Josh had encountered.

Jill explained to Josh that Nextdoor.com primarily consisted of negative posts, with people complaining about neighborhood issues or searching for lost pets or odd jobs. However, Franklin stood out from the rest. His posts exuded positivity, personal anecdotes, and engagement with the community. Whether he was sharing a video of himself dancing with the question, "Do you like how I dance?" or seeking opportunities to meet up and have fun, Franklin's interactions displayed a genuine connection with people he had recently met. His ability to create an atmosphere where everyone felt like old friends intrigued Josh, and he realized he had found a partner in his mission to bring more local chess players into the fold.

During the summer of 2022, Josh entrusted Franklin with his chess gear backpack, which contained four silicone mats, four digital chess clocks, and four chess sets (quadruple weighted plastic pieces with a median set weight of 56 ounces). Until that point, the two had been organizing street chess meetups on Saturday afternoons. It had originally started with Josh meeting a medical doctor friend named Stu for afternoon chess at a coffee shop. However, Franklin had an idea that would revolutionize their chess gatherings. He decided to shift the meetups to Saturday nights, right in the heart of West Palm Beach's vibrant alternative nightlife block, known as the 500 block of Clematis Street.

Until very recently, this entire block had been closed to vehicle traffic, allowing businesses to set up tables, games, and a performance stage in the middle of the road. The lively atmosphere featured live music, dining, drinking, and dancing, drawing in a diverse crowd. It was within this dynamic setting that West Palm Street Chess was born. Franklin, with his captivating personality, engaged with the people who were drawn to the chess tables, collecting their phone numbers. He then passed these numbers on to Josh, who took on the role of building the organizational infrastructure for West Palm Street Chess.

Josh created group texts and threads to keep the growing community of chess players informed about the upcoming meetups. Meanwhile, the Saturday night event on the 500 block remained a constant, consistently attracting new players each weekend. The pedestrian energy and enthusiasm were palpable, as the chess tables became a central part of the block's festivities.

What made West Palm Street Chess even more special was the dedication of Franklin and Josh to documenting the chess activity. Armed with their iPhones, they took countless photographs and videos that showcased the unique atmosphere of the gatherings. They diligently uploaded this content to various social media platforms, including Instagram, Facebook, NextDoor, Twitter, and YouTube. Through these visual representations, they aimed to demonstrate the authenticity of the community they were building, dispelling any doubts and inviting others to join in on the experience.

FRANKLIN AND JOSH ANECDOTES

In the heart of downtown West Palm Beach's vibrant entertainment district – the lively 500 block of Clematis Street – a bustling scene unfolds on a Saturday night. The entire block has been transformed into a pedestrian-only zone, abuzz with partygoers seeking excitement. Amidst this vibrant atmosphere, eight chess games are in progress right in front of a popular pool hall and bar called "Lost Weekend." The supportive collaboration between Lost Weekend and West Palm Street Chess allows us to utilize two expansive 12-foot tables set up on the sidewalk. This arrangement has become a regular occurrence on Saturday nights, typically from 8 pm until midnight. It serves as a testament to the pool hall's commitment to fostering the chess community in the area.

Engrossed in his own game, the sound of a familiar voice captured Josh's attention. It resonated through an amplifier, drawing his gaze upwards. There stood Franklin, microphone in hand, his exuberant energy palpable as he exclaimed, "Y'all know what time it is!" Caught up in the moment, Josh enthusiastically shouted back, "What time is it, Franklin!?" Without missing a beat, he responded with gusto, "It's CHESS TIIIIIME!" The chess players gathered around the tables burst into laughter, sharing in the infectious joy and camaraderie fostered by this unique chess experience on Clematis Street.

In a supermarket parking lot, I eagerly wait for a group of individuals I've only known for a short period, a month or two at most, to join me in my car. Our destination? North Miami on a Saturday night, specifically the hotel bar of the renowned Eden Roc Hotel, which hosted the prestigious 2022 Meltwater Champions Chess Tour / FTX Crypto Cup. With no detailed plan in place, we embark on this spontaneous adventure. Our intentions are simple: arrive after 9 pm, valet the car, set up our chess sets at the bar, and hope to engage with a grandmaster or two. This was the very tournament where Magnus and Hans were famously photographed playing chess on the sandy beach, just weeks before their momentous match.

The first to arrive is Miguel, a former FBI agent from New York City. Soon after, Franklin joins us. Lastly is Dana, who works

Kai Abuan, Nora Ahmed, Maximillian Bergler, Wolfgang Bergler, Colby Bennardo, Dr. Stu Bagatell, David Carrell, Julian Cassanetti, Mikey Feneloncosta, Lanier Glenn, Cairo Glenn, Nicholas Gardner, Farit Gazizov, Daniel Gazizov, Jeremy Gauthier, Nolan Gauthier, Ashley Goldstein, Vanely Geiloard, Christopher Gween, Aidan Gween, Rowan Gween, Susana Gween, Jonathan Jadunandan, Rigel Jadunandan, Luis Murga, Mamie Ocean, Quentin Thaddies, Andre Thaddies, Jeannie Tan, Jamie Roberts, Benjamin Rodney, Franklin Rivers, Diego Vasquez, Luca White, Georgina White, Duane White, Christine White, Liliana Krol-Wieczorek, Michalina Wieczorek, Radoslaw Wieczorek, Antosia Wieczorek, Stefania Wieczorek, Blair Williams, Casper Young.
Franklin Rivers is front and center. Josh Koehler is on the left side of the photo crouching. *Photo by Michael Dillow*

as a chef on Caribbean cruising yachts. Filled with good music and contagious laughter, we embark on our journey southward. Upon arrival, we find our way to the pool bar, where we promptly set up our chess sets and immerse ourselves in the game. As the night progresses, several Meltwater event employees join us, as well as a notable Grandmaster, adding to the excitement. We engage in rounds of Bughouse. The clock strikes midnight, and I gaze around me, taking in the surreal atmosphere, it strikes me – I've just met these incredible individuals, and it's all thanks to the unifying power of chess.

Sunday mornings at the Fern Street Chess Park offer a family-friendly atmosphere from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm. It's a time when many children arrive accompanied by their parents, and some of these young players exhibit remarkable skill, surpassing even adults in their chess prowess. Among them is Rigel, whose father hails from Suriname. Recently, he shared victory in our kids' blitz tournament with a young visitor from Poland, who happens to be Antosia's cousin. Antosia, a courageous young girl undergoing medical treatment at the Paley Institute in Palm Beach County, has gained a following of 28,000 on Facebook, where her parents share their experiences to raise awareness about a rare birth condition.
Despite their challenging circumstances, Antosia and her two younger sisters excel at chess, often catching opponents off guard with their talent. With their blonde hair neatly styled in pigtails, adorned with flowers, they exude both politeness and a competitive spirit, leaving many adults resigned to defeat.

In one corner of the park, Franklin, sporting a sleeveless shirt, tattoos and gold teeth, faces off against Antosia, who sits in a wheelchair following her recent medical treatment. Engaged in a spirited 5-minute game, Franklin fills the air with his chatter and laughter, while Antosia remains focused and silent, a serene smile gracing her face. Suddenly, Franklin looks up and exclaims, "What!? What!? Look who it is! What!?!" A middle-school aged boy named Michael has just arrived, accompanied by his father. Michael, known for his love of blitz chess and his penchant for trash-talking, finds in Franklin a mentor figure. We affectionately refer to Michael as "Michael 3000," envisioning his future success and rising ELO rating. In the midst of fending off Antosia's meticulous attack, Franklin leaps to his feet, engaging in a secret handshake with Michael 3000, consisting of ten intricate steps. The ritual concludes with a loud exclamation of joy from Franklin, who then proceeds to dance in a circle. As I savor my black coffee, I take in this heartwarming scene, appreciating the unique bonds formed through chess.

A MESSAGE FOR THE LIKE-MINDED

In closing, I asked Josh and Raphael if they had any message for our readers. Josh's answer was that there could be a huge demand for a park like this if the local community decided to take the initiative and act.

"I'm not a prodigy but just an average guy. Any community can do this. Obviously, you need to know who to contact to make it happen; you need that financial background and passionate desire to have it in your community. But since I work for City Hall, I know that cities want to have interconnected, healthy places. You're going to be surprised by the kind of response you get, with the diversity of race, religion, ethnic background, old homeless people, students, kids, experts, masters as well as beginners. Everyone's mixed in there and interacting with each other. I've really been struck by how everyone's unified by chess and how all those distinctions I mentioned go out the window when you're just joking around, having fun and trying to checkmate your opponent – unless you're like me and trying to flag the guy."

Raphael tells things from his perspective; based on his experience with the DDA, he says that one element doesn't make a project work. It's got to be a combination of elements: the right place at the right time

and having the people that are going to utilize it and make it successful.

"We tend to rather over-think things and focus a bit on the big projects and heavy lifts – but really thinking small and on a more intimate level for public spaces could have a big bang for your buck. Not everything needs to be large-space or expensive; these small investments in public realm activation by inviting people to come out and do something like play chess can yield big benefits, especially when you have smaller places to work with, which in many cases in urban districts is all you've got. I do see this growing and maybe we'll add other tables and other locations. But I just want to say: come out, play chess and explore our downtown. We're a unique place with character and charm. And I'm thrilled that this park has been a success. The thing that makes my job fun and exciting and keeps me motivated to come to work every day is being able to work with the community to make this stuff happen."

In their efforts to connect with the community members, Josh and Franklin realized they needed to go beyond being just an informal social group. They wanted to engage in community activism, which led them to establish a Florida not-for-profit organization called "The Street Chess Coalition, Inc." They have recently completed the incorporation process and are currently in the application stage for 501(c)(3) status.

The purpose of The Street Chess Coalition can be described through their threefold mission:

1) advocating for public chess infrastructure as a way towards making chess more accessible to the general public, especially those who may not have easy access to traditional chess clubs or venues. This includes initiatives such as creating outdoor chess spaces in public parks or installing permanent chess tables in public areas or working with local businesses to set up outdoor chess boards;
2) serving as an umbrella organization for the numerous community groups in our area that lack chess resources, but have incredible dedication from volunteers and mentors, etc. in order to marshal the incredible and untapped human resources of the volunteer community organization model. By working with volunteers, partner organizations, and local businesses, the Street Chess Coalition can leverage the collective skills and efforts of many individuals to achieve its mission of building a stronger chess community and promoting the benefits of the game to a wider audience;
3) advocating for the introduction of chess into the public school curriculum as a step towards building a stronger and more diverse chess community. By exposing young people to the game of chess early on, The Street Chess Coalition can help to cultivate a new generation of chess players and enthusiasts.

Their non-profit's corporate purpose is to preserve, promote and advance the cultural significance of chess as a game, art, science and sport, through community outreach and engagement; to inspire, whether in victory or in defeat, the qualities of perseverance, mental resilience, critical thinking, circumspection, courage, discipline, determination, humility, fair play, foresight, passion, creativity and poetic originality, while building self-image and self-esteem, encouraging personal growth, enriching the mind, and cultivating hope, happiness and a sense of fulfillment in people of all ages and backgrounds.

The Street Chess Coalition, Inc. represents their grand vision for a broader

A model for the spread of chess infrastructure in communities throughout the United States

The accomplishments of West Palm Street Chess can serve as a valuable model for creating chess infrastructure in communities where it previously did not exist. Here is a step-by-step approach that can be followed:

1. Utilize social media tools: Start by using platforms like Nextdoor.com to attract chess players who may not be part of a chess club or participate in tournaments. Reach out to unrated players who play online and engage them in the local chess community. Use social media to promote the chess culture, sharing photos and videos of the activities.
2. Play in public places: Choose a highly visible location with high pedestrian traffic and play chess in public during peak hours. This will generate curiosity and attract more people to join in. Collect the names and phone numbers of interested players to stay connected and grow the chess community through text messages and social media updates.
3. Approach local government: Reach out to the Parks & Recreation Departments or local elected officials to discuss the possibility of installing temporary, low-cost large bistro tables with chess boards imprinted on them. These tables can be placed in publicly accessible areas to create a visible presence for chess. Include storage boxes with chess pieces that remain with the tables at all times, secured with super glue to prevent loss or theft.
4. Document activity and gather evidence: Take photographs and document the organic chess activity happening at the site. This evidence will be useful to showcase the demand and usage of the temporary "pop-up" chess park.
5. Make a final presentation to local government: Once the demand for chess has been established and the temporary park is successful, make a detailed presentation to the governing body of the local government during the "public comment" portion of their regular meeting. Advocate for the allocation of funds for permanent chess infrastructure, such as concrete or stone tables. Highlight the positive impacts and community-building attributes of chess infrastructure.
6. Advocate persistently: Follow up the presentation with emails and phone calls to elected officials, city administration, city managers, and parks & recreation directors. Emphasize the benefits and positive impacts that chess infrastructure can bring to the community. Continuously advocate for the investment in permanent chess tables, as they can have a lasting impact.

By following these steps, demonstrating the demand and positive community impact of chess, and engaging with local government officials, it should be evident that investing in chess infrastructure is a logical and valuable decision.

American Chess Magazine will present this award at a ceremony in West Palm Beach on June 12. Senior Editor Pete Tamburro will make the presentation.

impact, aiming to serve as a potential model not only for West Palm Beach, Palm Beach County, and Florida, but also, potentially, for the entire United States.

COMPLEMENTARY EFFORTS

For many years, Bryan Tillis has played a crucial role in the chess community of Palm Beach County as the founder of Palm Beach Chess and an active tournament organizer and arbiter. His dedication to the game has led him to become the current President of the Florida Chess Association. Within this existing chess framework, West Palm Street Chess serves as a unique and complementary venue for non-traditional chess, offering an alternative to the more traditional chess club setting provided by Palm Beach Chess.

While Palm Beach Chess focuses on providing a traditional chess club experience, West Palm Street Chess offers a distinct and unconventional approach to the game. By organizing chess activities in public spaces and promoting outdoor play, it brings a dynamic and engaging dimension to the chess scene in the area. This non-traditional setting appeals to a broader audience and provides an opportunity for people to enjoy chess in a more casual and social environment.

Rather than competing with Palm Beach Chess, West Palm Street Chess serves as a valuable addition to the chess community. It expands the reach of chess and attracts new enthusiasts who may be more inclined towards the informal and interactive nature of street chess. By offering different experiences and catering to diverse preferences, both Palm Beach Chess and West Palm Street Chess (and The Street Chess Coalition) contribute to the overall growth and vitality of the local chess scene.

Otis Wilson, is another prominent figure in the South Florida chess community, particularly in Broward County, which falls between Palm Beach County and Miami-Dade County (represented by the 954 area code). Besides being an active tournament organizer in the region, Otis is the mastermind behind 954chess.org.

He has been making regular trips from Broward/Miami-Dade County to join us at West Palm Street Chess on Saturday nights, along with his students, for spirited games of speed chess. Curious about his commitment, I recently inquired why he travels such a distance for chess on a Saturday night. Otis responded that no one else is offering the unique combination of an active outdoor entertainment venue and speed chess quite like West Palm Street Chess. It is this distinctive blend that draws him to participate regularly.

When playing street chess, Otis has a distinct style. He always dons a black hood that obscures his face, adding an air of mystery to his game. This signature look has become synonymous with his presence at West Palm Street Chess.

Otis's involvement and support highlight the significance of West Palm Street Chess in the chess community. The initiative's ability to merge chess with a vibrant outdoor nightlife experience attracts dedicated chess enthusiasts like Otis, who appreciate the unconventional yet engaging atmosphere it provides. Through his participation, Otis has contributed to the growth, legitimacy and success of West Palm Street Chess, reinforcing its position as a leading destination for chess enthusiasts in the region.

HOW TO JOIN AND WHERE TO FIND THEM?

Regular meetups on the 500 block of Clematis Street in downtown West Palm Beach occur on Saturday nights, from 8 pm until well after midnight. Regular meetups at the Fern Street Chess Park in downtown West Palm Beach occur on Sundays, from 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Regular meetups in downtown Lake Worth Beach occur on Mondays, from 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm.

Everyone is welcome: individuals of all ages, races, ethnicities, nationalities, sexual orientations, and physical abilities – children, adults, elderly people, disabled individuals, and more – gathered around the chessboards, engaging in the game and building connections with one another. By joining this group you will be able to play chess in the rain, sip on coffee or beer, dance to music, engage in flirtatious banter, and have discussions on serious topics such as race relations and the criminal justice system. Also, you can join conversations on personal matters such as family, work-related challenges, legal issues, and aspirations for the future, all while feeling empowered by the new connections made through chess. Feel free to visit their newly launched website https://www.street-chess.org/

TACTICS

FOR TACTICS (CALCULATION) EXERCISES:

IDENTIFY THE TACTICAL MOTIFS

Look for patterns such as pins, forks, double attacks, discovered attacks, and skewers in the position.

CALCULATE VARIATIONS

Based on the tactical motifs you have identified, calculate various lines and variations to determine the best move.

CONSIDER THE CONSEQUENCES

Once you have calculated a few lines, evaluate the consequences of each move, and determine which line leads to the best outcome.

STRATEGY

FOR STRATEGY (POSITIONAL) EXERCISES:

EVALUATE THE POSITION

Determine the strengths and weaknesses of both your and your opponent's position, including pawn structure, piece placement, king safety, and control of key squares.

IDENTIFY A PLAN

Based on your evaluation, come up with a plan that takes advantage of your strengths and exploits your opponent's weaknesses. This can involve improving the position of your pieces, controlling key squares, or creating threats.

CONSIDER ALTERNATIVES

Once you have a plan, consider alternative moves or variations that might also achieve your goals. Choose the move that best fits your overall plan.

Aagaard's MasterClass

by **GM JACOB AAGAARD**

Photo by David Llada.

GM Jacob Aagaard won the 2007 British Championship; but is mostly known as a trainer and writer. He co-founded Quality Chess and killerchesstraining.com. His books include the Grandmaster Preparation series, the Decision Making series with Boris Gelfand and latest A Matter of Endgame Technique. Jacob works day and night to help players of all levels improve their game and achieve their goals.

AAGAARD

SHANKLAND

California-based **GM Sam Shankland** is a leading American chess player. In 2018, Sam achieved several milestones, including winning the U.S. Championship, surpassing 2700 Elo, and claiming first place at the Capablanca Memorial and the American Continental Championship. He is author of two chess books from the series of "Small Steps to Giant Improvement".

PLAY IT ALONG WITH SAM

Get ready to take your chess skills to the next level with Jacob Aagaard's Masterclass! Each issue is packed with 12 challenging exercises – 6 tactics/calculation exercises and 6 positional/strategic exercises – carefully curated by GM Jacob Aagaard and tested by none other than GM Sam Shankland.

In early 2023, Sam and Jacob held a training camp to put these exercises to the test, using real game scenarios from the end of 2022 tournaments in Charlotte, New York, and Hollywood. You'll be facing off against some of the brightest young talents in U.S. chess, as well as established grandmasters and players.

But here's the best part: even Sam, a seasoned Grandmaster, did not solve all the exercises correctly. That means there's a real chance for you to compete with him and test your chess knowledge. Whether you're a seasoned player or a beginner looking to up your game, Jacob Aagaard's Masterclass is the perfect way to challenge yourself and become a stronger chess player.

TACTICS

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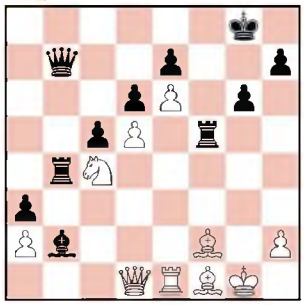

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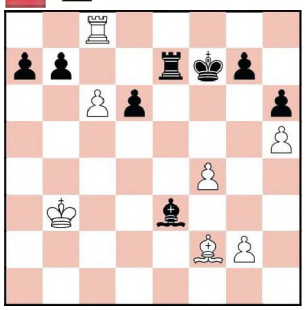

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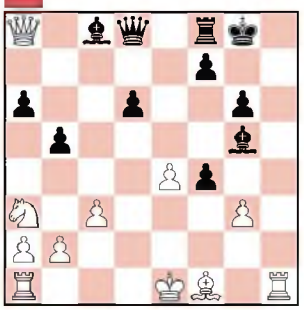

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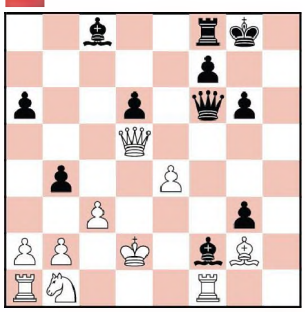
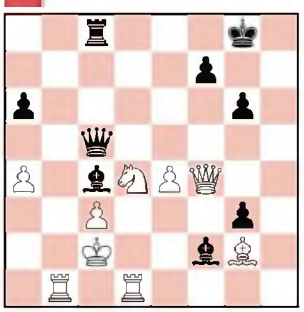
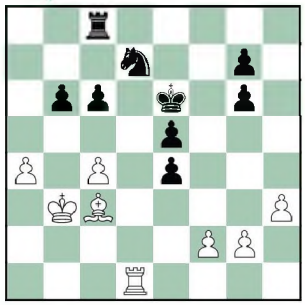


T6 ▼

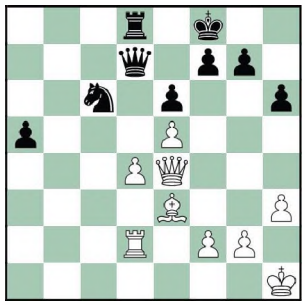


STRATEGY

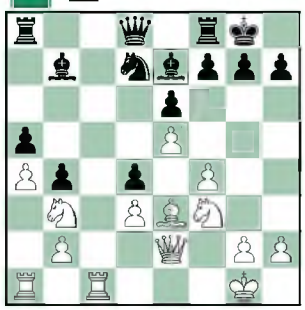
S1 △



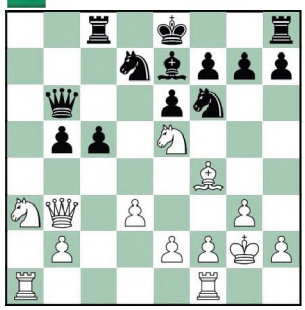
S2 ▼



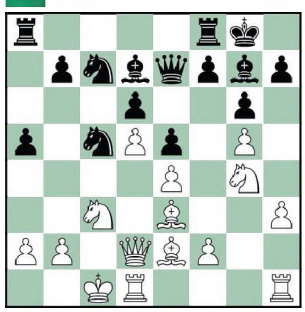
S3 △



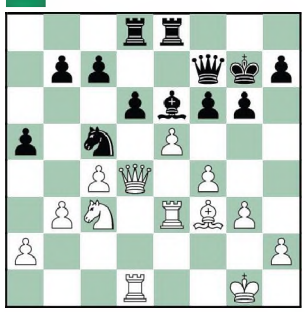
S4 ▼



S5 ▼



S6 ▼

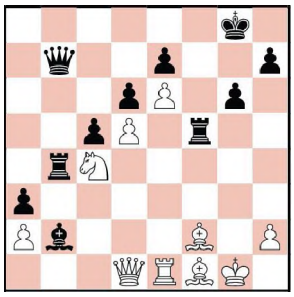


TACTICS

T1

Lazaro Bruzon	2615
Mark Heimann	2408

Hollywood 2022

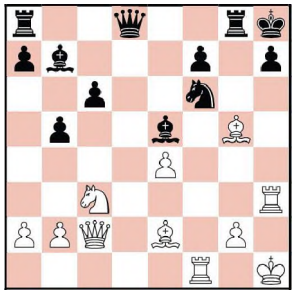


Bruzon won after a simple tactic: **32.♘xd6! ♖g5+ 33.♗g2** White is totally winning and netted the full point ten moves later. **1-0**

T2

Zhou Jianchao	2570
Andy Lin	2265

Hollywood 2022

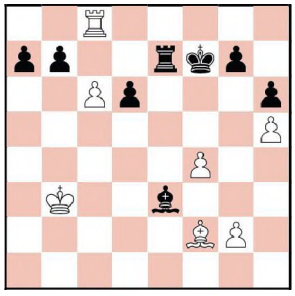


After **23.♗xf6+! ♗xf6 24.e5 ♗h4 25.♖f5 White won.**

T3

Shelev Oberoi	2328
Josiah Stearman	2377

New York 2022

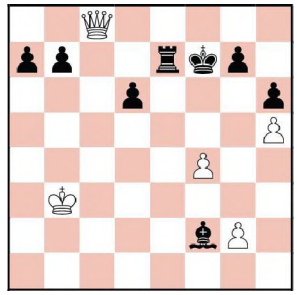


Sam got this wrong, scared of ghosts. White played 43.♗h4?, which Sam also wanted, but after 43...bxc6! **Black** holds, and **held the draw**, by move 77.

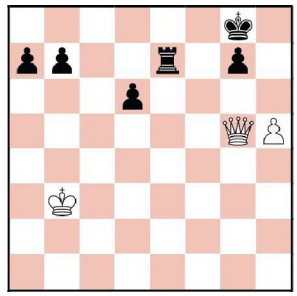
SOLUTION

43.c7! ♗xf2 44.♖f8+ ♔xf8 45.c8♕+ ♔f7 The tactic was not surprising to Sam, but he was worried Black would be able to set up a fortress. He is not, but it is close.

Give yourself half a point if you saw to here but never considered the fortress idea. Give yourself another half if you simply did not believe in the fortress at all.



46.g4! ♗e3 This was Sam's idea. 46...♗g3 47.g5 hxg5 48.fxg5 ♗e5 49.♔c4 looks fairly simple.
47.♕f5+ ♔g8 48.g5 hxg5 49.fxg5 ♗xg5!? Aiming for a fortress with the rook oscillating between f6 and h6. But as we shall see, it cannot get there.
50.♕xg5

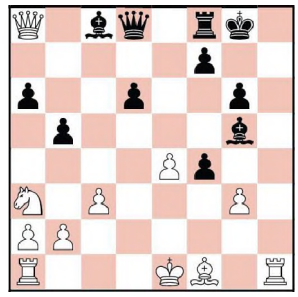


50...♖e6 50...♖f7 is an even more unfortunate attempt. After 51.♕d5 ♔f8 52.♕xd6+ ♔g8 53.♕d5! the zugzwang will soon be devastating.
51.♕d5 ♔f7 52.♕xb7+ ♖e7 53.♕f3+ ♔g8 54.♕g4 White is in control and will win slowly. Black cannot set up the fortress.

T4

Nicholas Vettese	2310
Farai Mandizha	2359

New York 2022



The next three exercises are all from the same game.
18...fxg3? 19.♕d5!? ♗e3 20.♗g2 was dangerous for White, but objectively not too bad. 19.♕a7! was even better. White is not worse at all.

Sam suggested something even worse: **18...♕b6?**, when he felt White had to run for the hills with 19.♕d5, which looks dangerous (but is survivable). But he missed that after 19.0-0-0 ♗b7 White has 20.♖h8+! Ouch! Jetlag sponsored this miss...

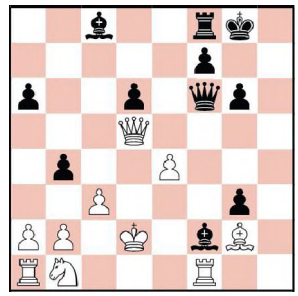
SOLUTION

Even without the big blunder, stronger was **18...♕e7!! 19.♗g2** A key point is that after 19.♕d5 ♗b7 Black will win back the rook.
19...f3! 20.♗xf3 ♗g4 Black's attack is entirely devastating.

T5

Nicholas Vettese	2310
Farai Mandizha	2359

New York 2022



This is not a natural tactical exercise. White wants to play ♔c2 and ♘d2 to

get his pieces into the game. Black has to prevent this.
23...♗e6? 24.♕d3 ♕e5 25.♔c2∞ was the game continuation. White is not worse.

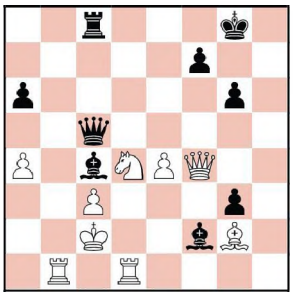
SOLUTION

23...♗d7!! was the prophylactic move.
24.♔c2 is best met with: **24...♗a4+! 25.b3 ♗b5**, when White is unable to get his pieces out and thus is dead lost.

T6

Nicholas Vettese	2310
Farai Mandizha	2359

New York 2022



34...♗a2?! 35.♘e2 ♗xb1+ 36.♖xb1 ♕c4 was very messy and **Black won** on move 48.

But with 37.♗f3, White could have kept the position balanced/chaotic, for now.

SOLUTION

Sam pointed out that **34...♗f1!** was not as simple as I had originally thought. White can play 35.♖b3, when Black has a big advantage after 35...♗xg2, as Stockfish points out.

But **35.♖xf1** is the difficult move to refute.
Then, after **35...♕xc3+ 36.♔d1 ♕xd4+ 37.♔e2** you would needed to have seen **37...♖c3!!** in advance, as Sam had. This key move prevents the white king from running away, a theme commonly known as Killzone. Black wins.

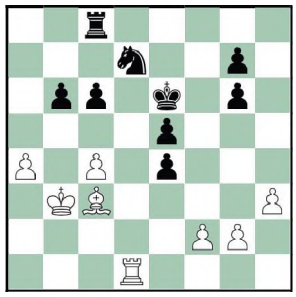
SAM MADE 4/6
ON THE TACTICS/CALCULATION PAGE

STRATEGY

S1

Illya Nyzhnyk	2687
Denis Kadric	2560

Hollywood 2022



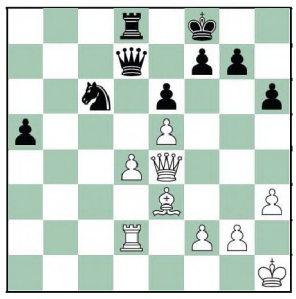
White cannot allow Black to play 33...♘c5+.
33.♗b4! is forced and after **33...c5** strongest is **34.♗d2!** to support the f-pawn. 34.♗c3?! ♖f8 is a bit annoying.

The game was **drawn** after: **34...♘b8 35.♔c2 ♘c6 36.♖b1 ♘d4+ 37.♔c3 ♘e2+ 38.♔c2 ♘d4+ 39.♔c3.**

S2

Konstantin Kavutskiy	2383
M. Siddarth	2243

Hollywood 2022



Black played **29...♘e7?**, allowing White to invade with the queen on h7, and **leading to a loss** after more happenings.

SAM MADE 6/6
ON THE MIXED/STRATEGY EXERCISES,
WITHOUT BREAKING INTO A SWEAT

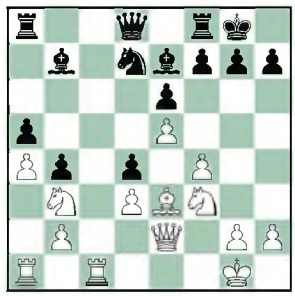
SOLUTION

Stronger was: **29...♔g8! 30.♕g4** "I was not sure about the evaluation after this," Sam said. Stockfish thinks that after **30...♔h8 31.♕h5 ♔h7** Black is slightly better.

S3

Alexander Shabalov	2504
Dante Beukes	2299

Hollywood 2022



Black has sacrificed a pawn in desperation to free his bad bishop. Shabalov played **19.♘bxd4?**, when **19...♘c5** gave Black fine counterplay. The game was later **drawn**.

SOLUTION

19.♘fxd4! was obvious, Sam felt. Not only did it prevent ...♘c5, but it was also the lesser knight. The knight on b3 is attacking the weak a5-pawn.
After **19...♘b6 20.♘c6** White has an overwhelming position.

S4

Vladimir Belous	2516
Jason Liang	2409

New York 2022

Sam and Jason agreed that **17...g5!** was

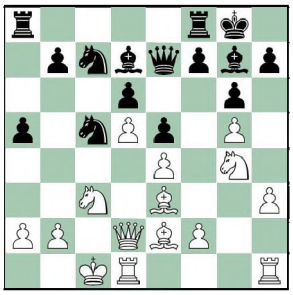
necessary.

After **18.♘xd7 ♘xd7 19.♗e3 ♖b8** the position **was equal**. White won on move 55, but here he has nothing.

S5

Bartlomiej Macieja	2514
Konstantin Kavutskiy	2383

Charlotte 2022



David Preuss texted this position to Sam as well. Kavutskiy and Preuss are in cohorts in the excellent Chess Dojo, so David was following the game live.

18...♘7a6? 19.f3 ♖fc8 20.♔b1 gave **White** a stable advantage. He **won** by move 35.

SOLUTION

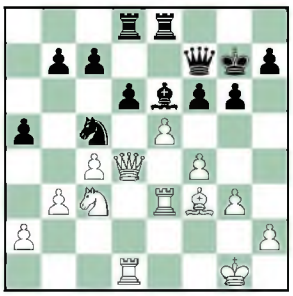
The King's Indian demands that you play actively at all times. Here **18...b5! 19.♗xc5 b4!** was strong, opening up the queenside for counterplay. Black is already better.

20.♘b1?! ♖fc8! is an important point. The bishop on c5 is not getting out of there.

S6

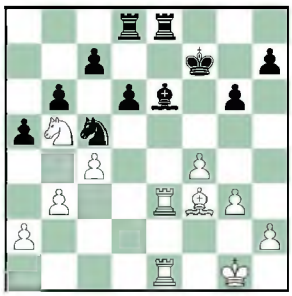
Ehsan Ghaem Maghami	2511
Ekin Baris Ozenir	2343

Hollywood 2022



28...b6? as played in the game looks natural, but Black was in for a nasty surprise.

29.exf6+! ♕xf6 30.♕xf6+ ♔xf6 31.♖de1 ♔f7 32.♘b5 White is totally winning.



32...♖e7 33.♘d4 ♖de8 34.♘c6 ♖d7 35.f5! 1-0

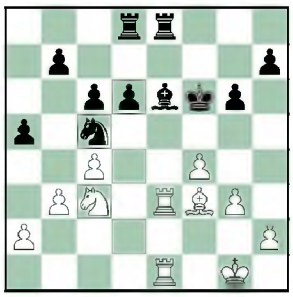
SOLUTION

28...♕f8!! Sam found this odd move out of necessity. Black has to defend the knight so he can recapture with the rook on d6.

29.exf6+ 29.exd6 ♖xd6! 30.♕xc5? ♖xd1+ with the queen hanging is the key point.

29...♕xf6 30.♕xf6+ ♔xf6 It is possible White is marginally better, but it is not worth worrying about.

A key point is that **31.♖de1 c6!** is absolutely fine.



But with the b-pawn on b6, the c-pawn would be hanging.

SAM'S TOTAL SCORE THIS TIME WAS 10/12

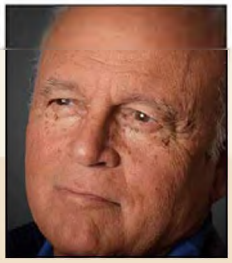
FICTION STORY

Antigone at Chess

By Alexis Levitin

Hillary had a rich summer tan, set off by his white linen jacket and trousers. He was fit, he was trim, and, as usual, impeccably dressed. All in all, he was satisfied with life and with himself. He had visited the Acropolis earlier that day and now, after dinner, was wandering through Plaka, that maze of restaurants, cafes, and souvenir shops favored by foreigners. From various directions came the plaintive sound of bouzouki beginning to warm up. As he strolled at ease, he chanced upon a gallery with a large, dynamic painting in the window. Without a conscious decision, he found himself gliding through the open door. The crowd inside, sipping retsina or a Muscadet, was as well dressed as he, but perhaps more casual in their attire. It seemed everyone was speaking Greek. He didn't know a word, but it pleased him, as if confirming that he had somehow navigated his way to the heart of Athens and Athenian society.

The engulfing murmur of that unknown tongue was strangely comforting, but the explosive canvases in that small gallery made him uneasy. He drifted along the walls, sipping his Muscadet and wondering what drew people to such abstract violence. Perhaps it was the long-haired artist herself, with her long legs and thin summer dress. He could not help but glance and glance again. Indeed, he found the creator more attractive than her creations. Later, after the crowd had dispersed, the painter had appeared at his side, casually taken him by the hand and, without a glance, begun to lead him home. Flustered, but pleased, he meekly followed her athletic figure, striding with purpose through the accustomed streets. As she slipped the key into the old lock and he heard the click, he wondered what he was doing there. When she turned on the lights, he found himself surrounded by her canvases – slashing strokes of crimson, bursts of Canary yellow, streaks of Prussian blue, a violent assault on his entire being. He preferred Constable or Thomas Cole. With them you knew where you stood. He fled to a cushioned armchair in the corner



Alexis Levitin was an English Professor for fifty years. He began playing chess at the age of six with two solid Russian chess players: Sergei Levitin, his father, and V.S. Yanovsky, who was his step-father. Alexis never became a true tournament player, but he did win first place in the Forest Hills High School chess tournament of 1956 and the Plattsburgh, New York Chess Club championship in the year 2000. He also received a second place trophy from the Polgar Chess Authority in New York City in 1999. Levitin's first book *The Last Ruy Lopez: Tales from the Royal Game* will be published by Russell Enterprises in fall of 2023.

and cradled a gin and tonic in his spider-like fingers. He was terrified, but knew he could not leave.

Antigone swiftly replenished his drink and poured herself something that smelled like licorice. Of course it was ouzo, turning mysteriously cloudy as the water mixed with the pure spirit. She sipped it slowly, prolonging the pleasure. Hillary didn't know what to say, but apparently the silence didn't trouble her. She glanced at him sitting stiffly across from her, either ignoring or resisting the gentle velvet of the over-stuffed armchair he had inadvertently chosen. She moved towards the CD player and soon the rhythmically enchanting sound of Zorba's dance was accompanying their drinks. He wondered for a moment if her choice was irony or condescension, but, in fact, he loved it, the stately building blocks of sound, the patient orderly development, as in the early stages of a chess game.

"No one can tell me how to paint," she suddenly exclaimed. "no one!" Hillary felt called upon to say something. "Your work is very expressive," he finally brought forth. She gave him a strange look. "I thought you were American, but now you sound British. What are you, after all?"

His only reply was an ambiguous tilting of his well-set head. He felt nervous, as if imprisoned by the disturbing challenge of her canvases, but he could not say that to her. And really, he wondered, would that have been criticism or praise? Her paintings, her animal body, her thin summer dress, all made him uneasy, but they also provoked him, as had the painting in the window of the gallery. And, after all, though trembling, he was there, wasn't he?

On a small end table beside his armchair was a wooden chess set, elegant in its silence. He had played the game his entire life and loved the order it offered, the possibility of balance, of control, of the firm dominance of reason. He wondered if the woman who had produced such wild, headstrong canvases could really play chess. He gestured toward the board, raised a tentative eyebrow and looked at her questioningly.

"Why not," she said in her charmed language. Giati ochi. And she slipped over from the far end of the couch, like a lioness drawing closer to its prey. "I will be White."

She played the Danish. He couldn't resist taking the pawns, one after another, gobbling them down as sacrificial offerings, while in the background the stately formal dance steps of Mikis Theodorakis began to slowly accelerate in a kind of Greek response to Ravel's Bolero. Three pawns in a row. Though the last one, at b2, was quickly recouped. And then she startled him with yet another sacrifice. Her white bishop swept down and grabbed the pawn at f7, and "check" came hissing from her lips, like a burst of steam from the nether parts of a locomotive about to set out on a journey. He took the bishop with his king. Surely a pawn and a bishop gave him an overwhelming advantage. Though impressed by her ferocity, he was convinced it would lead to an early defeat.

A couple of swift developmental moves by his impetuous foe and he asked her for a refill on his gin and tonic. She smiled, strode to the kitchen counter, mixed his drink, and brought it back, the glass perspiring in the warm evening air. It felt cold in his hand and the sharp hint of juniper refreshed him. But no gin and tonic could provide a wall to defend his king.

Her dark-squared bishop, since taking his greedy pawn, controlled the diagonal. Her two knights were both advancing and she hadn't even bothered to castle. And now her queen's castle suddenly came into play, controlling a semi-open file, the edge of his king's possibilities. Two knights, a bishop, and a queen and suddenly a pawn sprang precipitately forward. His king was sweating and so was he. In the queen side corner of the board his rook, knight, and bishop all stood where they had started. Somehow there had been no time for them to enter the fray. They were reduced to shameful bystanders, paralyzed onlookers at a developing disaster. Antigone pushed the pawn, his king tried to angle toward the queenside of the board. A knight gave chase. The other knight cut off his retreat. Not to mention the castle staring down the semi-open file. Antigone's queen, relentless, penetrated to the midst of the board, protected by one of her knights. The two knights blossomed their terrifying double reach. He felt his king drowning, encircled by the multiple tentacles of two octopi. He gazed at the board, absently sipping at his gin and tonic, but his fate was sealed. As in a Greek tragedy, there was nowhere to go. He side-stepped into the remaining unchallenged square and her second knight made its final elegant move.

She moved towards the CD player and soon the rhythmically enchanting sound of Zorba's dance was accompanying their drinks. He wondered for a moment if her choice was irony or condescension, but, in fact, he loved it, the stately building blocks of sound, the patient orderly development, as in the early stages of a chess game.

"Mate," she declared, as if announcing a preordained destiny. The entire board clicked into place as if there could have been no other result. Despite his drink, the roof of his mouth felt very dry.

He gazed at his sweating glass of gin and tonic but didn't dare raise his eyes. He heard what sounded like a deep chuckle and then the words, "Come, let me show you the rest of the house." It was much too late to flee, as had become evident on the chessboard. He rose like a somnambulist and, with mechanical docility, followed his long-haired hostess down the hall. She led him across the threshold of her bedroom, lit two slender purple candles, and said with a determined and amused air, "Let us see if we can melt your wax."

Yes, he thought with desperation, he would have been better off at Madame Tussaud's, where nothing ever changed. But it was far too late for the last flight to London. Far too late for any flight to anywhere. Like a lamb to the slaughter, he followed her meekly into a realm of pastel draperies, heavy with incense. He understood now that the chess game had just been the beginning.

DECODING OPENING TRENDS IN WORLD-CLASS CHESS

OPENING PREPARATION?
Trust Yourself And Have Fun!

At the 2023 American Cup in St.Louis, it was exciting to see opening preparations by the best U.S. players, led by the ever-creative and resourceful Hikaru Nakamura, but also principled players like Caruana and Dominguez.

By GM Emilio Cordova

ECO Codes

A
R ⌟1. d4, 1. e4
1. d4 R ⌟1... d5, 1... ♘f6
1. d4 ♘f6 R ⌟2. c4
1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 R ⌟2... e6, 2...g6

B
1. e4 R ⌟1... c5, 1...e6, 1...e5
1. e4 c5

C
1. e4 e6
1. e4 e5

D
1. d4 d5
1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 g6 ⌞3... d5

E
1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 e6
1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 g6 ⌟3... d5

What does it take to make a novelty playable? How to define a novelty in chess? Or how do we know that we are unleashing something interesting, good, new, and of course playable?

Well, definitely those are hard questions to answer. However, I think what makes a novelty good and playable, is the difficulty that our rival will have to deal with it over the board, in order to find the right sequence that will allow him/her to overcome the surprise and obtain a playable position.

Of course, we should remember that not all novelties are going to beequally good or interesting, therefore we need to be creative, and of course – willing to take some risks. The famous saying goes "risk it for the biscuit!".I invite you to join me on this interesting journey in which we are going to dive into all the interesting ideas that elite players have come up with recently.

THE AMERICAN CUP • 2023

American Cup

In the 2023 American Cup, we witnessed how the American dream came true in the hands of the amazing Hikaru Nakamura. Naka shows us that there is neither a clear path nor a right training method which will secure success. Hikaru found his own way, showing us that the traditional training methods don't matter that much.

What matters is that you trust yourself whatever you are doing and that you are having fun! You may like Nakamura or not, but we can't deny that he is spreading the chess word around the globe and that his contribution is enormous. A versatile player that he is, he had a lot to offer with his opening choices.

A

"UNIVERSAL OPENING"

How to beat someone who is considered almost unbeatable, well that's a very hard question to answer. However, as usual, Nakamura shows us how to achieve the unthinkable. Famous for his bravery and willingness to play every single game until the end, Hikaru is a true fighter. That's why he is the deserving winner of the prestigious American Cup 2023!

A06

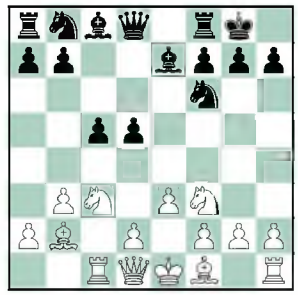
Hikaru Nakamura	2768
Wesley So	2761

St. Louis 2023, rapid playoff

1.♘f3 Naka starts with the most flexible move order, the always reliable ♘f3.

1...d5 2.e3 The so-called "universal opening".

2...♘f6 3.c4 e6 4.b3 ♗e7 5.♗b2 0-0 6.♘c3 c5 7.cxd5 exd5 8.♖c1!?

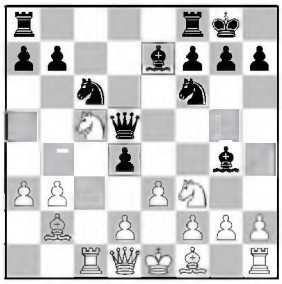


One of the benefits of this opening is its flexibility and the opportunity it gives to obtain pretty unbalanced positions. Of course this 8.♖c1 move could be considered a sort of novelty since no elite players have played it previously.

8...d4!? Wesley is not afraid of the intrepid ♖c1, and he is planning to fight for the initiative. 8...♘e4!? is another interesting try. Then, after a series of active moves 9.d4 ♘c6 10.dxc5 ♗f6! 11.♗e2 ♘b4!, Black should be able to equalize.

9.♘a4 dxe3 Here are a few interesting alternatives for Black. 9...b6!? 10.exd4 cxd4 11.♘xd4 ♗b7 12.♘f5 ♕d7 13.♘e3 ♘a6 leads to a very complex position.

9...♘c6!? is a very daring pawn sacrifice. However, Black is ahead in piece development, therefore this sacrifice should be at least sound. Let's go deeper and check 10.♘xc5 ♗g4 11.a3 ♕d5

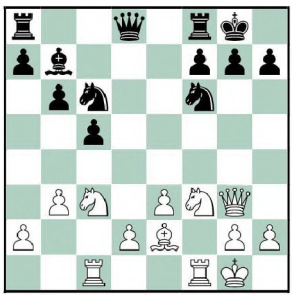


All the black pieces have taken the fast lane in order to get activated. The price was just a mere pawn. 12.♘d3 ♗xf3 13.gxf3 ♖fd8 Due to his active pieces, Black has more than enough compensation. For example, 14.♗e2 ♕f5 15.♕c2 ♖ac8 16.♕b1 ♗d6 with satisfactory play.

10.fxe3 Nakamura achieved what he was hoping for – a highly complex position where it's difficult to determine who has the advantage. In such positions, the outcome is often uncertain and victory is determined by the player's skill and strategic decision-making.

10...b6 11.♗e2 ♘d5 12.0-0 ♘c6 13.♕e1 The queen is advancing to threaten the black king's defenses. Her presence is like a knock at the door, signalling danger and imminent attack.

13...♗b7 14.♕g3 ♗f6 15.♗xf6 ♘xf6 16.♘c3



16...♘b4?! 16...♕b8! There is a belief that when a queen is harassing your king, you should use your own queen to defend your monarch.

A) 17.♕xb8 Without queens, the position becomes less dangerous for Black. 17...♖axb8 18.d4 cxd4 19.♘xd4 ♘xd4 20.exd4 ♖fd8 21.♖cd1 ♖bc8 22.♗c4 ♗a6 23.♗xa6.

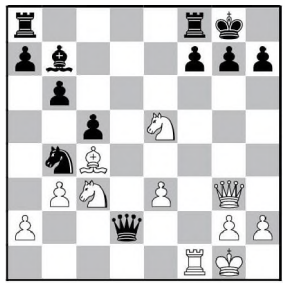
B) Or 17.♕h3 ♕c8 following the same strategy, intending to meet 18.♕h4 by 18...♕g4.

C) 17.♕h4 ♘e5!= trading all the potential attackers.

17.♘e5 ♕xd2?? A big blunder after which the black queen gets trapped. However, this position was far from clear and easy to play. In fact, it was full of intricate complications. Dear reader, allow me to show you some of the tricky lines of this position; in that way, you can get an idea of how complex and hard it was to play this position.

17...♘bd5 is logical, but far from simple. Then, 18.♗c4 ♕e7 19.♘g4 ♘xg4 20.♗xd5 ♗xd5 21.♘xd5 ♕e4 22.♘c7 ♖ac8 23.♘b5 ♕g6 should be equal, although not dry.

17...♕e7 18.♖xf6!! The beautiful coordination among the white pieces makes all the fireworks work! 18...♕xf6 19.♖f1 ♕d6 20.♗c4 ♕xd2 Principled and best.



A) 21.♘xf7 ♘d5 22.♗xd5 ♗xd5 23.♘e4! ♕d3 24.♘f6+ ♔xf7 25.♕c7+ ♔g6 26.♕g3+ ♔f7=.

B) 21.e4 b5 22.♗xf7+ ♔h8 23.♖f4 ♕c1+ 24.♖f1 ♕d2=.

C) 21.♗xf7+ ♖xf7 22.♘xf7 ♕xc3 23.♘h6+ ♔h8 24.♘f7+ ♔g8=.

18.♖fd1 ♕b2 19.♘c4 Black resigned

Emilio Cordova a Peruvian Grandmaster, peaked at a 2660 FIDE rating in December 2016. A talented junior, he won multiple Pan-American championships and has represented Peru in seven Chess Olympiads from 2004-2022, leading the team in 2016, 2018, and 2022. Cordova was the American Continental Champion in 2016 and tied for first in 2017. As part of the Webster Chess Team, he earned several Pan-Am titles and an individual gold in 2019. Emilio also has over 14 years of coaching experience.

The curtain has come down signalling a Champion for the American Cup 2023. The incredible Hikaru Nakamura!

B

THE KALASHNIKOV SICILIAN

B32

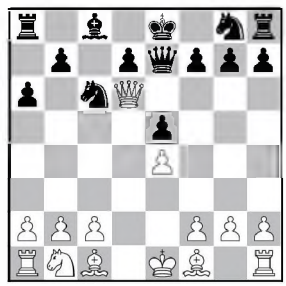
Leinier Dominguez	2743
Hikaru Nakamura	2768

St. Louis 2023, Champions Bracket

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 e5!? It's so refreshing to see once in a while a type of Sicilian different from the Najdorf, Dragon, or Sveshnikov. Of course, the approach of any Sicilian won't change at all – the dynamic factor is the core of any Open Sicilian system.

5.♘b5 d6 I have the belief that nowadays almost anything could be considered playable, as long as you have studied and analyzed it deeply enough with a strong engine.

5...a6 is an old fashionable line that goes 6.♘d6+ ♗xd6 7.♕xd6 ♕e7!? – an interesting try by means of which Black can aim to equalize. (Also *7...♕f6* has been tried a lot. White has an edge, but Black has ways of complicating matters and fighting for equality.)

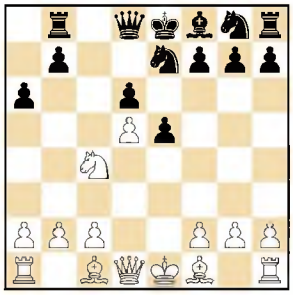


White has many ways to continue here. After, for example, 8.♕xe7+ ♘gxe7 9.♘c3 d5 Black has good chances to equalize.

6.♘1c3 a6 7.♘a3 ♗e6 8.♘c4 ♖b8 A very fashionable line directed against 9.♗e3, when Black follows with 9...b5, having protected the b6 square. Nakamura is known for his versatile style. It's undeniable that Naka is one of the most resilient players in the world, who has improved his game by playing online chess a lot. In other words, Nakamura is a son of the modern chess world.

9.♘d5 To illustrate the play for both sides, here are a couple of games. 9.♘e3 ♘f6 10.g3 h5 11.h3 (*11.h4 ♗e7 12.♗g2 ♘g4 13.♘cd5 ♕d7 14.♘b6 ♕d8 15.♘bd5 b5 16.c3 ♕d7 17.0-0 ♗d8 18.a4 b4 19.♕d3 a5 20.♘c4 0-0 21.♘xd6 ♗xd5 22.♕xd5 ♘e7 23.♕d2 ♕e6* and a draw was agreed on move 56 in W.So 2770 - T.Radjabov 2765, Internet, 2020.) 11...g6 12.♗g2 ♗h6 13.0-0 h4 14.g4 b5 15.♘cd5 ♗xd5 16.♘xd5 ♗xc1 17.♖xc1 ♘xd5 18.exd5 ♘a5 19.b3 0-0 20.♕d2 ♘b7 21.b4 ♖c8 22.f4 ♕b6+ 23.♔h1 ♕d4 was S.Sjugirov 2696 - P.Maghsoodloo 2699, Internet 2022, which Black won on move 39.

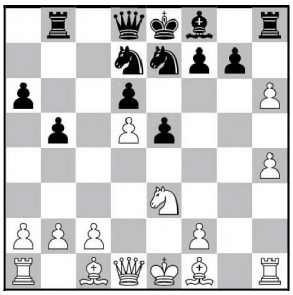
9...♗xd5 10.exd5 ♘ce7 Black has gotten an interesting and less explored position, which, of course, doesn't mean that his position is better or anything like that. However, it is a position where everything is possible.



11.g3 The most logical and natural move. However, apparently not the most ambitious one. 11.♘e3 ♘f6 (*11...b5?!* is strongly met by *12.c4!*) 12.g3 transposes to the text.

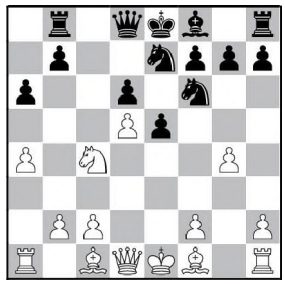
11.g4!? is an interesting idea suggested by Naka himself.

A) 11...b5?! 12.♘e3 ♘f6 13.g5 ♘d7 14.h4 h6 15.gxh6



15...♖xh6 16.a4 and White's play is a bit easier and more comfortable. However, the position is far from clear. For example, 16...f5 17.axb5 axb5 18.♘xf5!! ♘xf5 19.♗xh6 ♘xh6 20.♕h5+ ♘f7 21.♗h3 with a strong initiative for White.

B) 11...♘f6 12.a4!

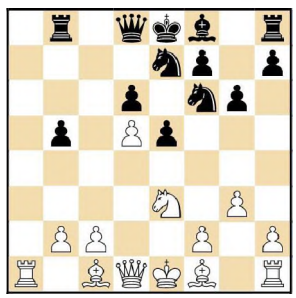


Once again, when you are forced to play unexpected and counterintuitive moves, it's clear that a novelty would be worth trying since we play against emotional humans and not emotionless engines. 12...♕c7 (Or *12...♕d7 13.a5 h6 14.♗g2 ♘g6 15.h4 ♕xg4 16.♕xg4 ♘xg4 17.h5 ♘f4 18.♗f3* with excellent compensation for the pawn in view of White's bishop pair.) 13.a5 h6 14.♘b6 ♘c8 15.♗e3 ♘xb6 16.♗xb6 ♕c8 17.h3. White has more space and the bishop pair, but Black has his own trumps, too.

11...b5 White was better after 11...♘f6 12.♗g2 g6 13.0-0 ♗g7 14.a4 0-0 15.a5 e4 16.♗g5 ♖e8 17.♗xf6 ♗xf6 18.♗xe4 ♘c8 19.♗g2 b5 20.axb6 ♘xb6 21.♘a5 ♗xb2 22.♘c6 ♕f6 23.♖xa6 ♖b7 24.♖e1 ♖xe1+ 25.♕xe1 ♗d4 26.♘xd4 ♕xd4 27.c3 and later won on move 76 in A.Heimann 2581 - U.Boensch 2494, Germany 2022.

12.♘e3 g6N Intentions for both sides are pretty visible: White aims to take advantage of his bishop pair and pawn majority on the queenside, whereas Black will aim to counter with ...f7-f5 in the future, and create his play on the kingside. The only previous game in my database saw 12...f5 13.h4 h5 14.a4 ♘f6 15.axb5 axb5 16.♖a7 g6 17.♗d2 b4 when White won on move 74 in H.Schmidt 2392 - S.Kalinitschew 2492, Travemuende 2008.

13.a4 ♘f6 14.axb5 axb5



15.♗g2 When you have the bishop pair it makes sense to open the position with 15.c4!?. However, playing this sort of move is not easy at all since it's too radical. A sample line might follow 15...bxc4 (*15...♗h6!? 16.cxb5 ♗xe3 17.♗xe3 ♘fxd5 18.♗h6∞* with a complex position, which I would prefer to play as White.) 16.♘xc4 ♗g7 17.♕a4+ ♔f8 18.♗g2 h5 19.0-0 h4 20.♕a3 hxg3 21.hxg3 ♘e8 22.♘a5 with a preferable position for White. Of course, I invite you to do some of your own analysis, since the position is rich with possibilities for both sides along the way.

After a tough fight **Black won.**

THE NAJDORF SICILIAN

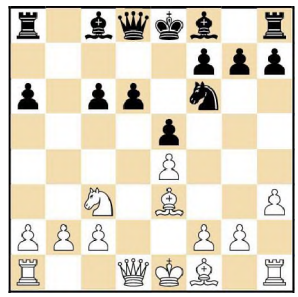
B90

Leinier Dominguez	2743
Sam Shankland	2710

St. Louis 2023, Elimination Bracket

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗e3 ♘g4 7.♗c1 ♘c6 8.h3 ♘f6 9.♗e3 e5 10.♘xc6!? Once again, a sort of a novelty, as this line has only been played by a few lower-rated players. Nowadays, it's very hard to find a novelty in the Sicilian Najdorf, since almost everything has been tried. However, as is well known, chess is so vast, and the possibilities to create are going to be always there. In fact, I believe that the hardest part is to have the willingness to look for something more and to be creative. That's why we should thank Leinier for having played something fresh.

10...bxc6



11.f4!?N The problem with novelties is that, most of the time, finding the right procedure is not easy. Imagine yourself in a maze where you can take many different paths and most of them look almost the same. Of course, the answer won't come clean and clear.

11.♗c4 ♗b7 (*11...♗e6 12.♗xe6 fxe6 13.0-0 ♗e7 14.f4 exf4 15.♗xf4 e5 16.♗e3 0-0 17.♕e2 d5 18.♖ad1 d4 19.♗g5 ♕b6 20.♕c4+* was W.Al Tarbosh 2177 - T.Kanyamarala 2082, Internet 2021,

which White won on move 63.) 12.♗g5 ♗e7 13.♕d2 ♕c7 14.♗b3 ♖d8 15.♖d1 h6 16.♗xf6 ♗xf6 17.0-0 0-0 18.♕d3 ♕b6 19.♘a4 ♕b5 20.c4 ♕a5 21.♘c3 ♗c8 22.♔h1 ♗e6 23.♗c2 g6 24.♗b3 and a draw was agreed in H.Haraldsson 1962 - J.Ulfljotsson 1672, Reykjavik 2020.

11...♗e7 A very natural move that seems to be perfectly playable. However, the flaws are going to be easily noted after further moves.

A) 11...♕a5 Of course, such a move is far from being considered clear or easy to find. We can say that it is not a natural move which could speak for itself. After, for example, 12.♗d2 ♕c5 13.♕f3 exf4 14.♗xf4 ♗e7 15.0-0-0 0-0 16.♗e2 ♗e6 17.♕g3 ♖fd8 18.♖hf1 ♘e8 19.♗e3 White is a bit better, though the position remains complicated.

B) 11...exf4 Captures are the most logical moves that need to be considered at first, especially when we are playing a gambit. Of course, it is not so easy to suggest this move since the benefits are hard to understand, in comparison to the liabilities that this capture could entail, like subjecting the d6 pawn to pressure that White could inflict. 12.♗xf4 ♗e6 13.♕d4 ♗e7 14.0-0-0 0-0 15.♗c4 Capturing on d6 might be the engines' first choice, but I prefer exerting further pressure on Black's position without entering any simplifications. 15...♕c8 16.♗xe6 ♕xe6 17.♖he1 keeping Black in passive mode.

C) 11...♘d7 Unless you are Karpov or you have been trained by him, such retreating moves are hard to find as they won't come easily and naturally. 12.♕f3 exf4 13.♗xf4 ♕f6 14.0-0-0 ♘e5 15.♕g3 ♗e7 16.♔b1 0-0 17.♗e2 ♕e6 18.h4∞ would lead to a characteristic Sicilian battle.

12.fxe5 dxe5 13.♕xd8+ ♗xd8 14.0-0-0 Now we can see that White's position is more pleasant and easier to play. Therefore, the novelty has worked!

14...♗e6 15.♗d3 ♘h5 16.♘a4 ♘f4 17.♗f1 ♗g5

18.♔b1! Always the subtle ♔b1! Leinier is well-known for his amazing preparation and his always very classic style, which means no suspect moves. Also, he is always a very correct player who likes to follow and respect the fundamentals of chess.

18...0-0 19.g3 ♘xh3 20.♗b6! A very subtle blow! After this move, Leinier obtained a huge advantage which he converted without any problems.

White won

C

HITTING THE BERLIN WALL

C67

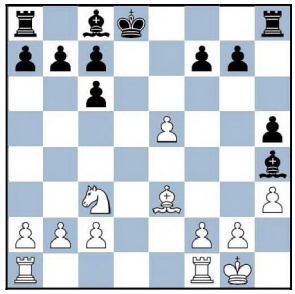
Leinier Dominguez	2743
Levon Aronian	2745

American Cup, St. Louis 2023

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘f6 4.0-0 ♘xe4 The Berlin wall is in sight!

5.d4 ♘d6 6.♗xc6 The main line. However, White has tried many different setups, though the Berlin wall has proven to be impassable most of the time.

6...dxc6 7.dxe5 ♘f5 8.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 9.h3 ♗e7 10.♘c3 ♘h4 11.♘xh4 ♗xh4 12.♗e3 h5



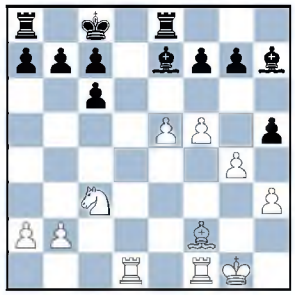
13.f3!?N A very interesting and subtle novelty played by Leinier. The Berlin Defense is well-known for its solidity and its almost impenetrable armor; we should not forget that this defense was employed by Kramnik which helped him to defeat the Baku "ogre" – the one and only Garry Kasparov!

13.♖ad1+ was played by many elite players, and Dominguez was one of them. 13...♔e8 14.♘e2 ♗e7 (*14...b6 15.♖fe1 ♗d7 16.♗f4 ♖d8 17.♘d4 c5 18.e6 cxd4 19.exd7+ ♔xd7 20.♗e5 c5 21.♗xd4 cxd4 22.♖xd4+* ended in a draw on move 138 in L.Dominguez 2743 - M.Antipov 2581, Internet 2023.) 15.f4 f5 16.exf6 gxf6 17.f5 ♔f7 18.g3 b6 19.♘c3 ♖e8 20.♖f3 ♗d6 21.♔f2 ♗b7 22.♗f4 c5 23.♖fd3 and White won on move 39 in M.Vachier Lagrave 2736 - W.So 2760, Internet 2022.

13...♗f5 14.g4!? With good criteria, the "Latin idol" Leinier sacrifices a pawn for the initiative. In fact, his idea is extremely profound and sound, burying alive the light-squared bishop!

14...♗xc2 15.♖ac1 The idea of a novelty is to surprise your opponent... With a novelty, you cannot expect to win immediately, however, if you could inflict some moral damage, time advantage, doubt, or anything that could help to destabilize your opponent, your novelty is certainly worth a try.

15...♗h7 16.f4 ♖e8 17.♖cd1+ ♔c8 18.♗f2 ♗e7 19.f5



And now we can see the energy contained within the novelty!

19...b6 20.♗g3 ♔b7 21.♔g2 ♖ad8 22.♖xd8 ♖xd8 23.♖d1 ♖xd1 24.♘xd1 c5 25.♔f3 Even though White has obtained wonderful compensation for the sacrificed pawn, the material is too reduced. Therefore, the chances of victory are not so great.

25...♔c6 26.♘e3 hxg4+ 27.hxg4 and after a tough struggle, Levon was able to hold a **draw** in this game, securing his progress to the next round. This pawn sacrifice was very attractive and sound, however, the Berlin Defense has proven its solidity once again. Despite how wonderful White's idea was, when there are not too many pieces on the board it's hard to squeeze something out of the position when there is not much to squeeze.

E

A TRICKY CATALAN

Fabiano Caruana is certainly one of the best theoreticians of the present world elite. His thorough preparations for the World Championship match with Magnus Carlsen in 2018 must have left him with a bag full of surprises in almost every opening. This time, his opponent Ray Robson fell victim to a strong novelty that appeared on the board as early as on move 10 of a tricky Catalan Opening!

E04

Fabiano Caruana	2766
Ray Robson	2702

St. Louis 2023, rapid

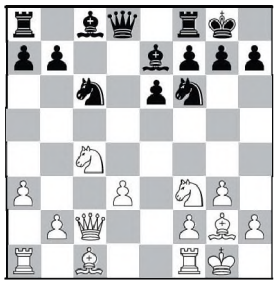
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 d5 4.♗g2 I have the feeling that this move order is the most ambitious for White, since it forces Black to go into more complex lines.

4...♗b4+ 5.♘d2 This has proven to be a rather more ambitious and less explored line in comparison to 5.♗d2, which has been well-studied and played in thousands of games. Therefore, most players know what to do, and which path to take.

5...0-0 6.♘gf3 dxc4 7.♕c2 Still, a lot of games have continued this way, though not that many in comparison to the 5.♗d2 line.

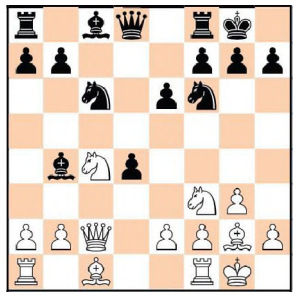
7...c5 8.0-0 Here comes the less explored path! Now Black will be out of preparation.

8...cxd4 9.♘xc4 ♘c6 It was necessary to find 9...d3! in order to obtain a playable position... The beauty of a novelty relies on the fact that finding the best moves or following the right path for your opponent will definitely not be an easy task, since the signal has been lost. 10.exd3 ♘c6 11.a3 ♗e7



A) 12.♖e1!? ♘d5 Once again not a natural move... 13.♘e3! ♗f6 (After *13...♘xe3 14.♗xe3*∞, White's position looks more promising and easier to play.) 14.♘g4 ♗d4 15.♗e3!∞ with very powerful center control.

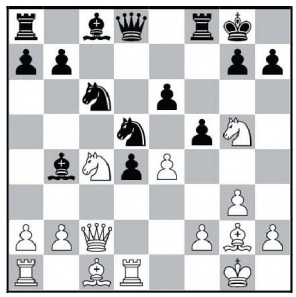
B) 12.b4 is met by 12...b5, apparently the main move according to my engine... and a very counterintuitive one! 13.♘ce5 ♘xe5 14.♘xe5 ♘d5 15.♘c6 ♕d7 16.♗b2∞ with a very complex position ahead.



10.♖d1!N After this Black's position becomes difficult to play. It's interesting to note that Black didn't make any obvious mistakes, and White didn't play any exceptional moves. Despite this, Black found himself in a bad position, by just playing logical moves.

10.a3 ♗d6 11.♖d1 e5 12.b4 a6 13.h3 ♗e6 14.♘xd6 ♕xd6 15.e3 ♖ac8 16.♕b2 d3 17.♘g5 ♗c4 18.♘e4 ♘xe4 19.♗xe4 f5 20.♗xd3 ♗xd3 21.♕b3+ ♔h8 22.♕xd3 was D.Fridman 2626 - G.Gajewski 2589, Warsaw 2021, which White later won on move 39.

10...♕e7 Once again, I think it's very hard to find the best moves for Black. 10...a5!? is one of the options for Black that deserved attention. Another one is 10...♘d5!?, which can be met by 11.♘g5!, setting more traps and heading into a more complex position. (If *11.a3 ♗e7 12.♘xd4 ♘xd4 13.♖xd4 ♗f6 14.♖d3 ♕c7!* Black should be able to equalize...) For example, 11...f5 12.e4!



12...dxe3 13.♘xe3 ♘xe3 14.♗xe3 White will obtain powerful compensation. 14...♕e8 15.♕c4 (*15.♕b3 h6 16.♘h3*∞; *15.♗f4!? h6 16.♘f3*∞) 15...h6 16.♘h3∞. **White won** on move 54. ■

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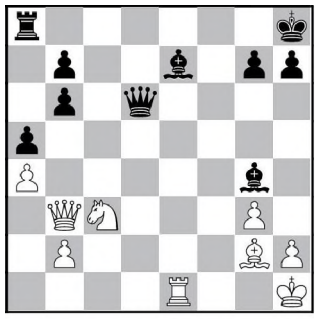
CHALLENGE TO READERS

For each position find the winning combination

*Solutions on **page 96***

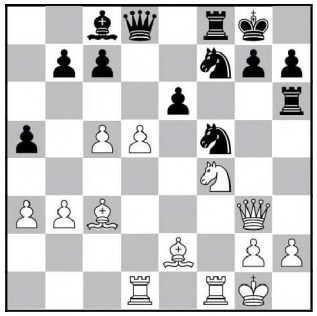
01

Hanauer - Green
Marshall CC Championship 1940



02

B.Blumin - J.Soudakoff
Manhattan CC Championship 1940

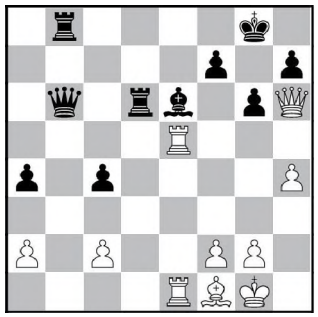


03

F.Reinfeld - J.S.Battell
U.S. Championship Preliminary 1940

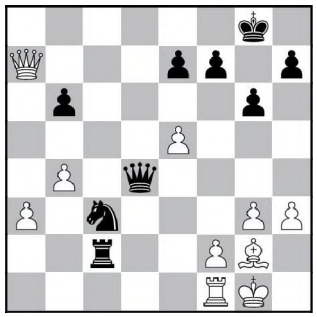
04

A.Kupchik - R.Fine
U.S. Championship Final 1940



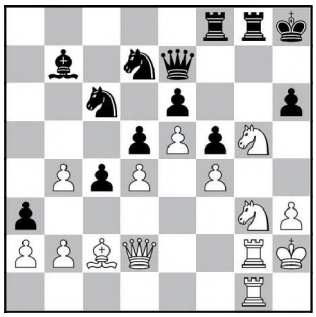
05

W.W.Adams - A.C.Simonson
U.S. Championship Final 1940



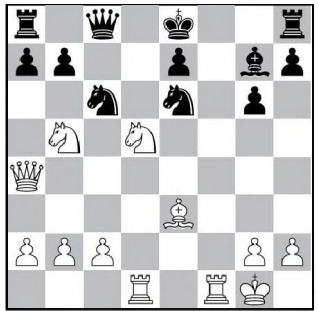
06

W.W.Adams - I.Kashdan
U.S. Championship Final 1940



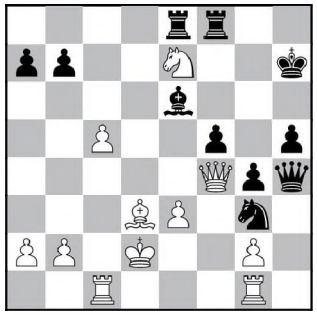
07

E.Dimock - N.J.Hogenauer
Correspondence 1940



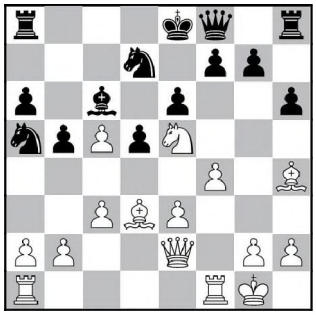
08

A.Roddy - R.Fine
A.C.F. Open Preliminary 1940



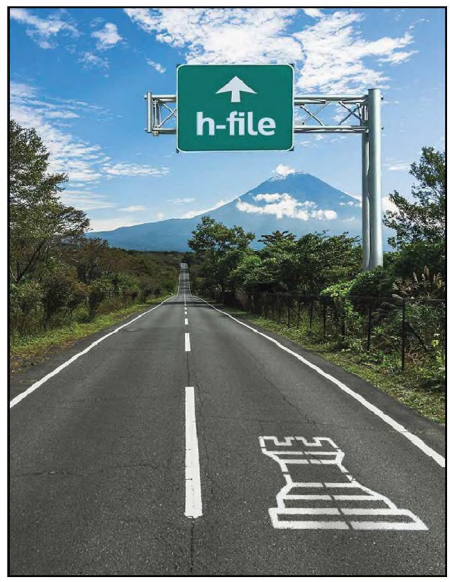
09

A.E.Santasiere - E.S.Jackson
N.Y. State Championship 1940



TEASING YOUR OPPONENT'S KING AT ALL TIMES – A MODERN APPROACH TO MIDDLEGAME PLAY

Dangers on the open h-file



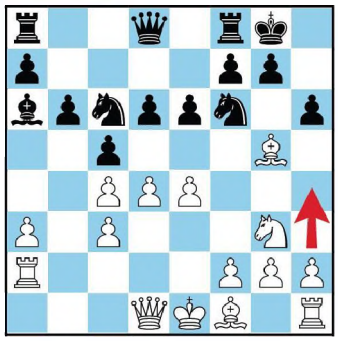
Many contemporary games see early pawn thrusts such as h2-h4 or ...h7-h5, which have made a significant impact on the development of opening theory. However, the key to the success of such a treatment of the opening lies in the conduct of the middlegame, where the open h-file often proves to be extremely important when combining positional play with attacking ideas.

By GM Eduardas Rozentalis

My attention was attracted by two positions from the games of the latest World Championship Match between Ding Liren and Ian Nepomniachtchi.

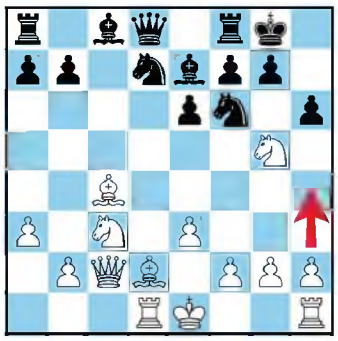
In both of these games, the newly crowned World Champion, Ding Liren, advanced a piece to g5. And when his opponent attacked that piece with a pawn, he simply protected it by advancing his h-pawn. We will not analyze these games here, as they are annotated on other pages. We might just mention that in one case Nepomniachtchi accepted the sacrifice, whereas in the other he declined it. In both cases it was a justified decision!

GAME 8



12.h4

GAME 14



13.h4

The idea of this sacrifice, often just temporary, is to open the h-file and initiate threats against the exposed king. Let's discuss how dangerous it is to have an open h-file right next to your king. How promising is it for the side who is launching an attack? First of all, how can it be opened at an early stage of the game?

In many openings, one of the sides wants to develop his kingside bishop to g2 or g7. To do so, he plays g2-g3 or ...g7-g6 immediately giving his opponent a chance to attack it with the h-pawn, which can be advanced h2-h4-h5 or ...h7-h5-h4. Such openings are the Pirc Defense, the Grunfeld Defense, the King's Indian Defense and some others.

The Grunfeld Defense is one of the openings which we can say provoke White to play h2-h4 at a very early stage. The reason is that Black plays ...g7-g6, followed by short castling, and that gives White a desired target. First we'll analyze a game between two Canadian players in a GM-norm tournament, the first in a series of fine chess events organised by the new Toronto Excelsior Club.

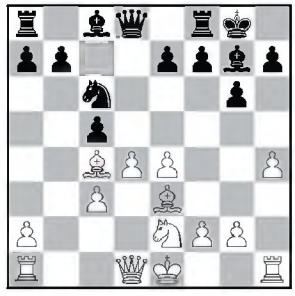
D87

Bator Sambuev	2434
Zachary Dukic	2238

Excelsior GM March, Toronto 2023

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♗g7 7.♗c4 c5 8.♘e2 ♘c6 9.♗e3 0-0 White has a choice – either to castle short or start an attack on the kingside.

10.h4 Another option is 10.0-0. In this case, White completes his development and is ready to make use of his strong pawn center.



Hailing from Vilnius, Lithuania, **Eduardas Rozentalis** is a celebrated chess Grandmaster and coach. He has held a key role in the global chess scene, representing Lithuania on the primary boards at eleven World Chess Olympiads. His prowess is reflected in his more than 50 victories at international chess tournaments held in various countries, including the US and Canada. Besides his success on the chessboard, Rozentalis is also a published author with five chess books to his name.

▲ Eduardas Rozentalis *Photo by David Llada*

After the text move White takes aim at Black's king and also his pawn on g6, deciding to commence his attack immediately without castling himself, because his rook is still on h1. Pushing the pawn to open the h-file is quite natural and it's quite a popular line – even among the world's best players.

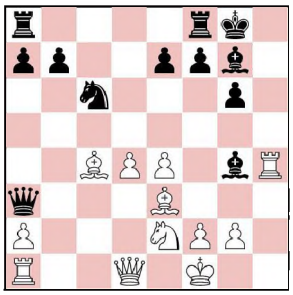
10...cxd4 11.cxd4 ♕a5+ 12.♔f1! ♕a3 At first sight, this looks like a strange move. The idea is not to allow White to obtain good squares for his pieces – for example, the b3 square for the queen – or maybe go for f2-f3, followed by ♔f2.

Black also has other options. 12...h5?! gives White a comfortable position after 13.f3 ♖d8 14.♕b3 e6 15.♖d1, with good prospects in the center.

Also 12...♗d7 13.h5 ♖ac8 14.hxg6 hxg6 15.♗b3 ♕a6, pinning the white knight and freeing the a5 square for his own knight, seems okay for Black.

13.h5 From here the pawn will probably be traded to open the h-file or else pushed further to h6.

13...♗g4 14.hxg6 hxg6 15.♖h4



15...♗xe2+ Normally it's not good to exchange a bishop for a knight and give your opponent the bishop pair for free. But here Black reduces White's attacking potential and also quickly brings his queenside rook into the game.

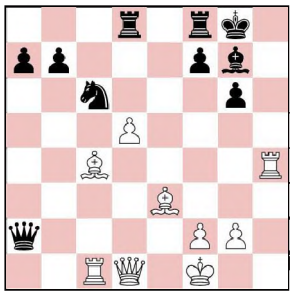
16.♗xe2 ♖ad8 The tactical way to win the central pawn doesn't work: 16...♘xd4? 17.♗xd4 ♖ad8 18.e5! ♗xe5 19.♕d2 and White wins.

17.d5 Central pawns should advance!

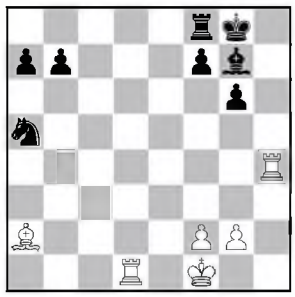
17...e6 Black has to attack the pawn center. 17...♗xa1? 18.♕xa1 is bad for Black, because of troubles along the open h-file.

18.♖c1 exd5 19.exd5 ♕xa2 Black takes a pawn and, at the same time, attacks the d-pawn.

20.♗c4 White also doesn't waste any time. He protects the pawn while improving the positions of his pieces.



20...♕b2 A new move. Earlier 20...♕a5 had been tried in an online game when White should have replied 21.♗d2 (instead of the sharp and unclear *21.♗g5 ♖d7*) 21...♖xd5 22.♗xa5 ♖xd1+ 23.♖xd1 ♘xa5 24.♗a2±



The exchange is more important than two pawns due to the open files for White's rooks.

21.♖e4 The rook leaves the h-file and comes to the central file. However, if needed, White's heavy artillery can return to initiate threats against the black king.

21...♘a5 The knight remains active here, in spite of the fact that it is far away from the center.

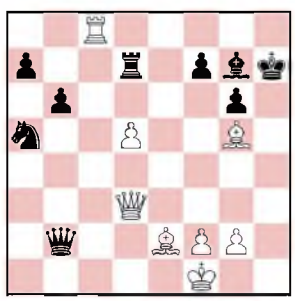
22.♗e2 b6 Probably too slow. However, after 22...♖d7 23.d6 ♖fd8 24.♗f4 ♘c6 25.♖b1, White would preserve his initiative.

23.♗g5 ♖d7 24.♖e7 We can see now what was the purpose of the rook transferring from the h-file to the e-file – it was to penetrate to e7.

24...♖fd8? And this is the decisive mistake. Black forgot that his king is vulnerable as the h-file is open. 24...♖d6 was necessary. Nevertheless after 25.♗f4 ♖f6 26.♗e3, White preserves his dangerous passed pawn and better chances.

25.♖xd7 ♖xd7 26.♖c8+ ♔h7 26...♗f8 27.♗h6 is also losing for Black.

27.♕d3 Suddenly there is no defense against mating threats on the h-file!



27...♕a1+ Or 27...♕b3 28.♕e4!.

28.♗c1 Black resigned as there was no defense against 29.♕h3.

The Catalan is a very solid opening for White. If Black wants to obtain his own chances he can go for play on the h-file, as White plays g2-g3 at a very early stage.

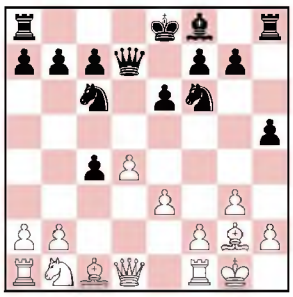
E04

Gabor Papp	2583
Eduardas Rozentalis	2567

2nd Bundesliga Ost 2017

1.c4 e6 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 d5 4.d4 dxc4 5.♘f3 ♗d7 6.♘e5 ♗c6 7.♘xc6 ♘xc6 8.0-0 ♕d7 Black defends his knight and introduces the option of castling long.

9.e3 h5!? But this is what we want to see – Black looks for counterplay by pushing his pawn up the h-file. 9...♖d8 is the most popular move when Black gives up the idea of castling long in favor of the possibility to attack White's center by ...e6-e5.



10.♘d2 h4 Advancing without further delay. The black king can wait a while longer on e8.

11.♘xc4 0-0-0 Finally. Black preserves both options for his h-pawn: capturing on g3 or pushing further to h3 with an attack on the white bishop. Trading pawns on g3 was possible at once. However, after 11...hxg3 12.hxg3 Black cannot immediately exploit the open h-file, as White's light-squared bishop controls the key squares h1 and h3. This is why White was not afraid to allow an open file right next to his king.

12.b4 White sacrifices a pawn in order to open the b-file and get his own attack going against the black king. Personally, I wouldn't be in such a hurry and would play something natural, probably preferring 12.♗d2.

12...♗xb4 Black has no choice. Otherwise that pawn will advance to b5 with great force.

13.♖b1 The rook immediately comes to the b-file, exerting pressure on Black's king position.

Gabor Papp *Photo by David Llada*

13...♘d5 The knight is heading for b6 to cover the b7 pawn.

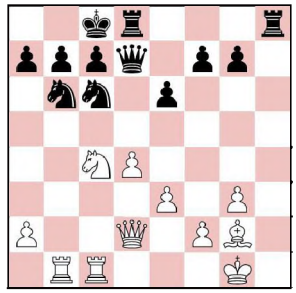
14.♗d2 Maybe it was better to retain the bishop by playing 14.a3 ♗c3 15.♖b3 with complex play.

14...♗xd2 15.♕xd2 hxg3 16.hxg3 Finally Black goes for a trade of his h-pawn – and White agrees to open the h-file.

But, why not 16.fxg3 ? Actually, in this particular case it is quite playable. However, it will provide Black with a target – the pawn on h2. Another drawback for White is that his pawn center is no longer that strong, as the d- and e-pawns cannot be supported by another pawn.

16...♘b6?! Black covers his b-pawn, but opens the path of the white bishop. Maybe it was better to move the king to a safer place – in the corner. 16...♔b8 17.♖fc1 ♔a8.

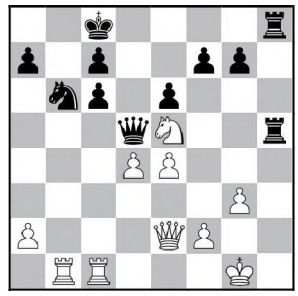
17.♖fc1



17...♖h5 Finally Black starts to make use of the open h-file – but not for a direct attack on the white king. He needs it to transfer the rook along the fifth rank.

18.♗f3?! White forces the rook to go where Black would probably go anyway! Instead, there were two other options.

The sharp one: 18.♗xc6, exchanging the main defender to break Black's pawn structure. Then 18...bxc6 19.♕e2 ♖dh8 20.♘e5 ♕d5 21.e4, when...

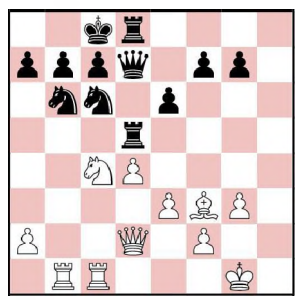


A) In the event of 21...♖h1+ 22.♔g2 ♖1h2+ 23.♔f3, White's king is quite safe on f3.

B) 21...♕a5 22.♖c5 ♕a3 23.♖b3 ♕a4 24.♖bc3 ♖h1+ and it seems that White's pieces will soon destroy the black king. But fortunately for Black, he has a forced draw: 25.♔g2 ♖8h2+ 26.♔f3 ♖xf2+ 27.♕xf2 ♕d1+ 28.♔g2 ♕h5 and White can't avoid a perpetual check. For example: 29.g4 ♖h2+ 30.♔g1 ♖h1+.

I would consider the second option – the natural 18.a4!, preserving all the threats on the queenside, while Black can hardly achieve anything on the kingside in spite of the open h-file. As already mentioned, the bishop controls the key squares, and will not allow Black's rooks to penetrate.

18...♖d5! Black sacrifices his rook to cover his queenside from the raking white bishop! He now threatens 19...♘xc4, followed by 20...♘e5.



19.♘xb6+ Again White hurries unnecessarily. He should have refrained

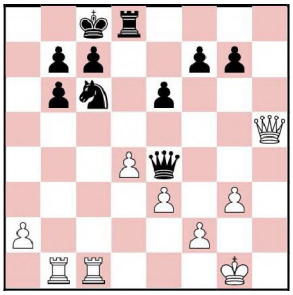
from trading pieces and played 19.♕c2±.

19...axb6 20.♗xd5 ♕xd5 In return for the sacrificed exchange Black has gained access to all the light squares on the kingside. He is now ready to play 21...♖h8 with an attack on the h-file.

21.♕e2 ♕e4? When you have to shoot – shoot. Don't talk! When you have a chance seize the open h-file – do it. Don't wait! Black wanted first to threaten ...♘xd4, but missed White's response.

After the correct 21...♖h8, 22.f3 is the only move, after which Black has the strong 22...e5! 23.dxe5 ♘xe5 24.e4 ♕e6. Here it is White who has to be careful of Black's threats on the h-file.

22.♕h5! White's queen is first to come to the h-file. Black is late and so White takes advantage of that!



22...e5?! This natural move loses. 22...g5! was the last chance. This pawn would effectively be a shield between the kingside and the center and, although White would retain a slight edge, it wouldn't be easy for him to break down Black's solid position.

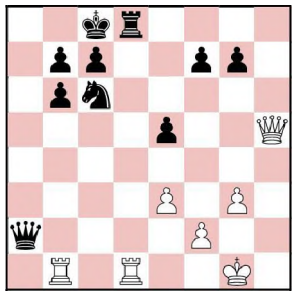
23.d5! Ending the black knight's dream of coming to d4 or e5 and forcing Black to take the pawn. In addition, the d-file will be opened, and it is next to the black king! However, not 23.♕xf7? ♖h8–+.

23...♕xd5 After 23...♖xd5 White can already grab the pawn: 24.♕xf7+–.

24.♖d1 White's rooks have been waiting a long time for some open files to work on. The time has come!

24...♕xa2 Black tries to pay the same price. White has survived despite having an open file right next to his king. Maybe Black can achieve the same thing?

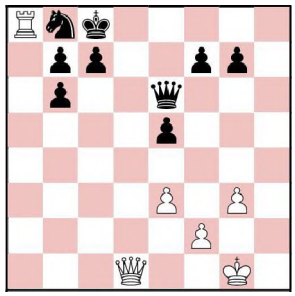
Instead Black could probably have put up more resistance after 24...♕e6± 25.♖xd8+ ♘xd8 26.♖d1 f6 27.♕h7 ♕e7 28.a4. However the rook is much stronger than the knight and in the long run White should be able to exploit his material advantage.



25.♖a1! Unfortunately Black cannot survive! White clearly wins. 25.♖xd8+? would be a mistake, as after 25...♘xd8 White cannot seize the a-file.

25...♖xd1+ 26.♕xd1 ♕c4 27.♖a4 27.♖a8+ ♘b8 28.♕h5 was also winning.

27...♕e6 28.♖a8+ ♘b8



29.♕h5 The white rook has penetrated to the black king's camp via the a-file. Now the white queen is finding its way in as well.

29...♕e8 30.♕h3+ Black resigned

And what about the case when a piece comes to g5 supported by a pawn on h4? Is it a good idea to attack like that? And is it worth accepting such a sacrifice? Let's take a look at the next game.

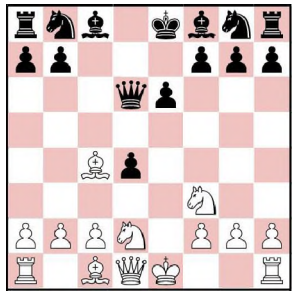
C07

Eduardas Rozentalis	2588
Thomas Luther	2604

European Team Cup, Panormo 2001

This is a game in which White places his bishop on g5, protected by a pawn on h4, and Black decides to take it.

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 c5 4.♘gf3 cxd4 5.exd5 ♕xd5 6.♗c4 ♕d6

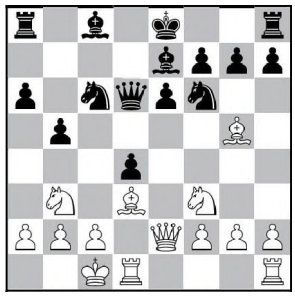


7.♕e2 Not the main move. However, it has given me several nice wins. The idea is quite simple. White wants to develop his queenside pieces quickly and castle long. Only after that will he regain the sacrificed central pawn.

7.♘b3 is not good because of 7...♕b4+. That's why White has to first protect his bishop. Normally White chooses 7.0-0.

7...♘f6 8.♘b3 ♘c6 9.♗g5 a6 Black can also play 9...♕b4+ 10.♗d2 ♕b6 11.0-0-0 ♗d7 12.♗g5 ♗c5, in an attempt to keep his central pawn alive.

10.0-0-0 b5 11.♗d3 ♗b7 11...♗e7 is probably more precise.



A) After 12.♔b1 ♗b7 we have the position from the game. However, 12...♗d7 saves the d4 pawn.

B) Or 12.♘bxd4 ♘xd4 13.♘xd4 ♕d5! and Black gains the advantage. For example, after 14.♗xf6 ♗xf6 15.♘xb5 ♕g5+ 16.♔b1 axb5 17.♗xb5+ ♔f8, White doesn't have sufficient compensation for the piece.

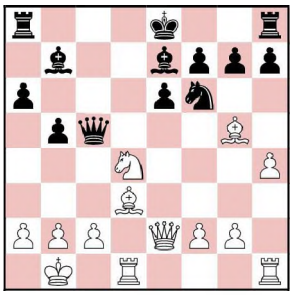
12.♔b1 The immediate 12.♘bxd4 ♘xd4 13.♘xd4 ♕d5! leads to a forced sequence after 14.♗xf6 gxf6 15.♘xb5 ♕xa2 16.♘c7+ ♔e7 17.♕h5 ♗h6+ 18.♕xh6 ♕a1+ 19.♔d2 ♕a5+ 20.c3 ♕xc7, when both kings are exposed and the position is pretty equal.

12...♗e7 13.♘bxd4 ♘xd4 14.♘xd4 White has regained the pawn and completed his development. But Black just

needs to castle to be ready for the fight. The position is equal.

14...♕c5 Of course the knight can't be taken because of the discovered attack: 14...♕xd4 15.♗xb5+, but the natural 14...0-0 would be the most logical option.

15.h4! An important move and at that time a novelty. White protects his bishop and also shows his readiness to attack the black king should it decide to castle kingside.



15...0-0 16.♖he1 Why that? We were just talking about the attack on the h-file. But White needs to take control in the center. In fact he now threatens ♘f5 and possibly ♘xe6.

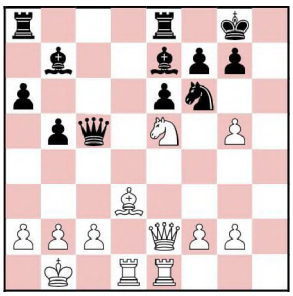
16...♖fe8 Protecting the bishop. In case of 16...♖fd8 White gets a slightly better rook endgame after 17.♘f5 exf5 18.♕xe7 ♕xe7 19.♖xe7 ♗xg2 20.♖g1 ♔f8 21.♖e5 ♗e4 22.♗xe4 fxe4 23.♗xf6 gxf6 24.♖xe4±.

17.♘f3 The knight has done its job on d4 and now reroutes to the more active e5 square.

17...h6 18.♘e5! White plays ♘e5 in spite of the fact that Black has just attacked the bishop. The sacrifice is only temporary.

18...hxg5 I would have refrained from accepting the sacrifice in favor of the natural 18...♖ad8.

19.hxg5



19...g6 The knight is hanging, but what is important for us is that the h-file is now open and White can quickly bring up his pieces to attack the black king. For example: 19...♘d5 20.♗h7+! with a quick mate.

Or 19...♗d6 20.f4 ♗xe5 21.fxe5 ♘d5 22.♕h5 with a strong attack.

20.gxf6 White still doesn't have any tactical decision at his disposal. After 20.♘xf7? ♔xf7 21.♕xe6+ ♔g7 22.gxf6+ ♗xf6 23.♕g4 g5 24.♕h5 ♔f8, Black's king looks safe.

Or 20.♗xg6? fxg6 21.♕d3 ♘e4 22.♖xe4 ♖ad8 23.♖d4 ♕xe5. Again Black is able to protect his king.

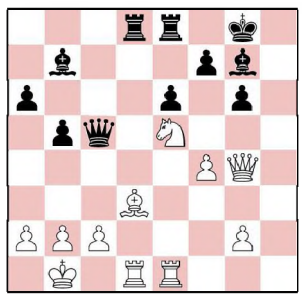
20...♗xf6 Black has given back the piece but in return brought the bishop closer to his king, hoping to cover the dark squares.

21.f4! White should still control the center! An exchange of the dark-squared bishop gives Black enough time to protect his kingside. 21.♘d7 ♕e7 22.♘xf6+ ♕xf6, followed by ...♔g7 and ...♖h8, and the h-file is covered.

21...♖ad8 After 21...♗xe5 22.fxe5 White would obtain a good target on f7 and a nice outpost on f6. Black's position would then be strategically lost.

22.♕g4 After this move we can see another problem with the open h-file. The fact that Black doesn't have a pawn on h7 makes his pawn structure more vulnerable.

22...♗g7 Losing immediately. Black's last chance was to play 22...♕f8 23.♖h1 ♕g7. However, after 24.♖de1, White's threat of ♘xg6 is a big problem for Black.



23.♘xf7! Now this sacrifice wins.

23...♔xf7 Black also loses in the event of 23...♖xd3 24.♖xd3 ♕f2 (*24...♔xf7 25.♖d7+ ♖e7 26.♕xe6+*) 25.♘h6+ ♔f8 26.♖xe6 ♖xe6 27.♖d8+ ♔e7 28.♖e8+! ♔xe8 29.♕xe6+ ♔d8 30.♘f7+ with a quick mate.

24.♗xg6+ ♔f8 25.♖xd8 Black resigned, because after 25...♖xd8 26.♕xe6, there is no defence against ♕f7 or ♕e8.

From the games we have just analyzed we can draw some general conclusions:

1. For the attacking side there is a good chance of getting to the opponent's king.
2. Even if there is no immediate decisive penetration, that can come later.
3. The king and the pawn structure are exposed and vulnerable. For the defending side it is quite dangerous because of the above-mentioned reasons.
4. The defending side can feel relatively safe if in possession of a strong bishop (on g2 or g7) or other pieces which can control the key penetration squares (h1+h3 or h6+h8).

To show that practical chess is much more complicated than these conclusions I would like to show you the next game.

A08

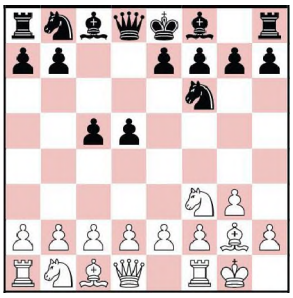
Kassa Korley	2432
Tiger Hillarp Persson	2514

OBRO International, Copenhagen 2022

This is the most complex game in this article, where control of the open h-file passed several times from one side to the other. It was played by two very creative players – the Danish-American IM Kassa Korley and the Swedish GM Tiger Hillarp-Persson.

1.♘f3 c5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 d5 4.0-0 White employs a very flexible setup. Quite a lot of players have a similar approach with the white pieces – particularly so in the earlier 'London system era'. Here White first develops his kingside, castles short, and only then decides whether he wants to attack Black's center by c2-c4 or d2-d4. Of course he can also simply play d2-d3 or b2-b3.

Tiger Hillarp Persson *Photo by David Llada*



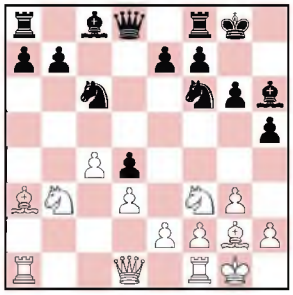
4...h5! It is Black who first demonstrates his uncompromising style. Note that he wants to immediately push his pawn further to h4, which means that an attack on the white king can start at any moment. Instead, Black has a lot of logical options: 4...g6, 4...e6 or 4...♘c6.

5.c4 d4 6.b4 You do what you want, I am playing the Volga Gambit! However a natural way of playing with 6.d3 ♘c6 7.e3 e5 8.exd4 exd4 9.♗f4 could seriously question Black's 4th move choice.

6...cxb4 7.a3 bxa3 Maybe 7...b3, keeping the a-file closed?

8.♗xa3 ♘c6 9.d3 g6 Black wants to retain his dark-squared bishop to ensure a more complicated game. Otherwise nothing is wrong with the natural 9...e5.

10.♘bd2 ♗h6 11.♘b3 0-0



12.♗c5 The central pawn is under attack. To save it Black has to sacrifice the exchange.

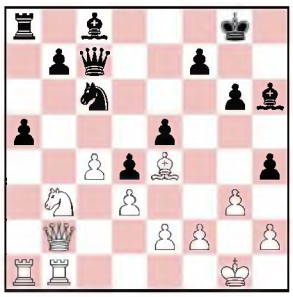
12...e5 No problem! For the exchange Black retains his strong center and obtains control of the dark squares.

13.♗xf8 ♔xf8 13...♗xf8 looks more natural.

14.♕b1 If White had realised what was going to happen a few moves later, maybe he would have played 14.h4.

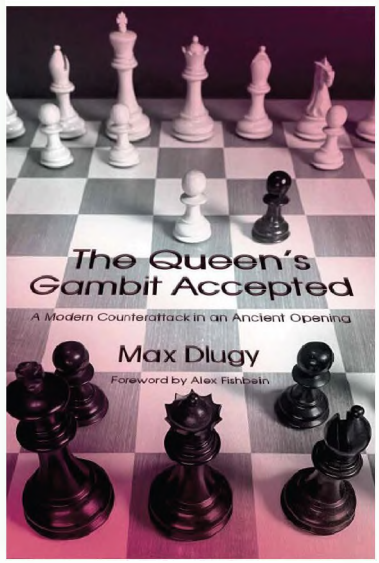
14...♔g8 15.♕b2 ♕c7 16.♖fb1 a5 17.♘fd2 h4! The time has come for this advance. Black seizes the first possible moment. Another interesting option was to advance on the other side of the board: 17...a4 18.♘c5 a3 and this pawn can become a very strong passer - or a serious weakness. Who knows?

18.♘e4 ♘xe4 19.♗xe4 What should Black do now? He has already carried out his plan of advancing the h-pawn as it has reached the h4 square.



19...♗f8 Persson decides to first transfer his bishop to b4. It's a good idea. However, first of all it was necessary to decide the fate of the h-pawn. 19...h3 or 19...hxg3 were both good alternatives.

20.♕d2 20.gxh4!? This pawn can sometimes be taken! Then 20...a4 21.h5!± and White closes the h-file to open the g-file, which he will be able to exploit for his attack.



The Queen's Gambit Accepted

Max Dlugy

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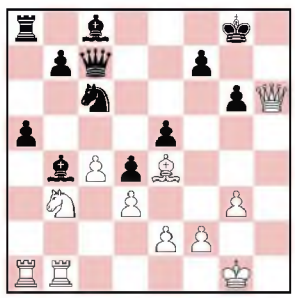
20...♗b4 21.♕h6 hxg3 22.hxg3



The h-file is now open. But who will profit from it? Maybe White, as his queen is already there?

22...♗f8 23.♕h1 ♗b4? A tactical mistake. 23...a4 24.♘d2 a3 or 23...♘b4 were more precise ways for Black to continue.

24.♕h6? White misses 24.♗xc6 bxc6 25.♘xd4! with a great advantage, as the knight can't be taken in view of 25...exd4 26.♖xb4.

24...♗f8 25.♕h4 ♗e7 26.♕h1?! White is trying to avoid the perpetual attack on his queen. But he should go to h2 followed by ♔g2 and ♖h1.

26...♔g7 Black is getting ready to fight for the open file, after moving his light-squared bishop and bringing his rook to h8.

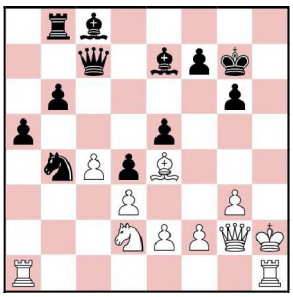
27.♘d2 ♘b4 27...♗d7!∓ was natural and strong.

28.♕g2 ♖b8 Black has to waste time on this move as the pawn on b7 is unprotected.

29.♔h2? This is a big mistake which allows Black to seize the key file. It was necessary to block Black's light-squared bishop by 29.g4.

29...b6 Black could already seize the h-file by 29...♗h3 or 29...♗g4.

30.♖h1



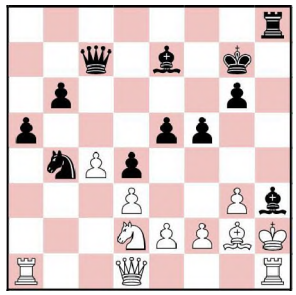
30...♗h3! An unexpected blow!

31.♕g1 A major concession. 31.♔xh3? would lose by force after 31...♖h8+ 32.♔g4 f5+ 33.♗xf5 gxf5+ 34.♔f3 e4+ 35.dxe4 fxe4+ 36.♘xe4 ♖f8+ 37.♘f6 ♕c6+ 38.e4 ♕xf6+ 39.♔e2 d3+ 40.♔d2 ♕b2+.
But 31.♕xh3 ♖h8 32.♕xh8+ ♔xh8 33.♔g2+ leads to an unclear position.

31...♖h8 Threatening ...♗f1.

32.♕d1 f5! Black has now seized both the h-file and the initiative. He will now endeavor to increase his advantage.

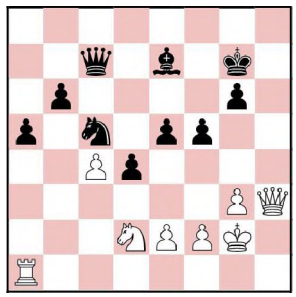
33.♗g2 In the event of 33.♗f3 e4! 34.dxe4 d3, Black opens the center and dark squares for his queen and bishop, as ...♕e5 and ...♗c5 will follow with great force.



33...♘xd3! Winning a second pawn for the exchange.

34.♔g1 The knight can't be taken because of the discovered check: 34.exd3 ♗g4+.

34...♗xg2 35.♖xh8 ♔xh8 36.♔xg2 ♘c5 37.♕h1+ ♔g7 38.♕h3 So it's White who again controls the open h-file. Does it mean he stands better again? Well, there have been some changes. Fewer pieces are left on the board and by now Black has two pawns for the exchange, which represents a small material advantage. However, White preserves some chances of launching an attack on the open file.



38...♕b7+ 39.♘f3 39.f3 was another and probably better way to continue. White prepares a pawn attack with g3-g4 and after 39...♗f6 40.♖h1 ♔g8 41.g4 ♘e6 both sides have their chances.

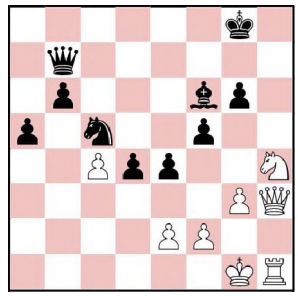
39...♗f6! The bishop transfers to the long diagonal, where it will be able to control the important g7 and h8 squares.

40.♖h1 ♔g8! A nice king retreat. White's pieces are stationed on the open h-file, but Black controls both the h8 and h7 squares. Any attempt to infiltrate by ♕h6 can be met by ...♕g7.

41.♔g1 An understandable attempt to free the knight and reinforce the attack. However White should play 41.♖b1, followed by ♕h6, in order to attack Black's pawns.

41...e4! Black is not afraid of the attack. He advances his central pawn and obtains a decisive advantage.

42.♘h4

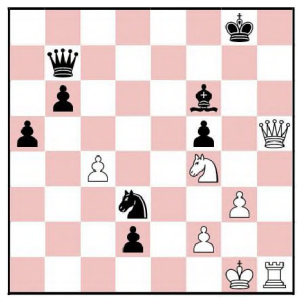


42...d3! There is no need to protect the g-pawn. It's more important to quickly create a passed d-pawn.

43.exd3 exd3 44.♘xg6 d2 45.♕h5 White has brought three pieces into the attack. Nevertheless Black remains confident as his king is safe!

45...♘d3 Black's knight has to prevent its counterpart from accessing the f4 square.

46.♖h4 Nor do other moves save White. For example, 46.♘f4 is met by a spectacular blow.



46...♕xh1+! 47.♔xh1 d1♕+ 48.♕xd1 ♘xf2+.
46.♖h3 is the most stubborn defense, although after 46...♘b2 47.♘e7+ ♕xe7 48.♕g6+ ♔f8 49.♕h6+ ♗g7 50.♕xd2 ♘xc4, Black has a decisive material advantage.

46...♘b2 Black is ready to promote his d-pawn so **White resigned.**

THE MAGNIFICENT 3
Remarkable Recent Games

By GM Sarunas Sulskis

Sarunas Sulskis is a nine-time champion of Lithuania and a regular member of his country's national team. As a teenager, he studied at the Botvinnik–Kasparov Chess Academy and later graduated from the Kaunas College of Management and Law. He qualified three times for the knock-out World Championship, and his most notable recent result is a victory at the traditional 2022/23 Hastings Chess Congress. In addition to his achievements as a player, Sarunas is a FIDE trainer, arbiter, writer, and passionate chess promoter.

Recent U.S. events have provided me with plenty of candidate games for this column, but Saint Louis Chess Club tends to stand out if distinctions among the numerous chess contests on U.S. soil have to be made. The American Cup 2023 has been extensively covered by my ACM colleagues, therefore I will focus on the Spring Chess Classic 2023. (The crosstables can be found on page 95 -*Ed.*)

Despite trailing the American Cup in terms of the competitors' status and average rating, the Spring Chess Classic nevertheless distinguished itself by staging a classic style closed tournament in which the losing player is not threatened with elimination from the contest, but continues on equal terms with the rest of the field. Moreover, in contrast to the American Cup, the Spring Chess Classic featured a greater international mix of players representing such countries as the Netherlands, Hungary, Uzbekistan and others. This added a flavor of diversity to the field and ultimately, I believe, served as a high-quality masterclass for the array of up-and-coming, often teenage American talents.

1 LIANG'S HEROIC KING WALK, A DORMANT ROOK AND A MONSTER KNIGHT!

I will start off with a Group B tournament game between a Hungarian GM Gergely Kantor and an American junior Jason Liang. Out of the Noteboom Variation of the Queen's Gambit Declined, Kantor achieves a promising position with a nice pawn center, supported by a bishop pair. Kantor declares his intentions with four consecutive middlegame pawn moves, 19.e4, 20.e5, 21.f4, 22.c5, only to soon discover his invasion has stalled badly. After installing his bishop proudly on d5, Jason proceeds to squeeze White's threats dry by consecutively trading the light-squared bishops and then also the queens. By that stage White's position must have certainly lost all its appeal for Kantor. Nevertheless he could hardly have believed his eyes as young Liang escorted his king across the board on a breathtaking circuitous journey ...♔e8-d7-c6-b5-c4-d3-e4!

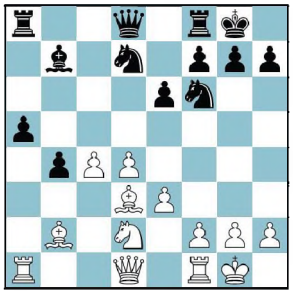
D31

Gergely Kantor	2532
Jason Liang	2529

Spring Chess Classic - B, St.Louis 2023

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 c6 4.♘c3 dxc4 5.a4 ♗b4 6.e3 b5 7.♗d2 a5 8.axb5 ♗xc3 9.♗xc3 cxb5 10.b3 ♗b7 11.bxc4 b4 The players are walking along the path of the Noteboom Variation, which is quite old and famed for its middlegame complexity.

12.♗b2 ♘f6 13.♗d3 0-0 14.0-0 ♘bd7 15.♘d2 A well-known line in the Noteboom, but it allows Liang's knight jump. 15.♕c2 and 15.♖e1 are the most frequently seen alternatives.



15...♘c5!? Up to now this knight jump hasn't been too popular. Players normally prefer 15...♕c7 or 15...e5. However, as a consequence of the present quite spectacular win by Liang, 15...♘c5 may increase in popularity.

16.♗c2 ♘ce4 17.f3 In terms of stopping Black's queenside pawns from advancing, the white queen does not feel out of sorts on d1. The direct 17.♘xe4 is therefore also worth considering. For example, 17...♘xe4 (or *17...♗xe4 18.♗a4 ♕c7 19.f3 ♗c6 20.♕b3*) 18.f3 ♘f6 (*18...♘d6 19.c5 ♘c4??* runs into a double attack *20.♕d3+−*.) 19.♖f2 ♗a6 20.♗b3 ♕c7 21.♖c2 is better for White.

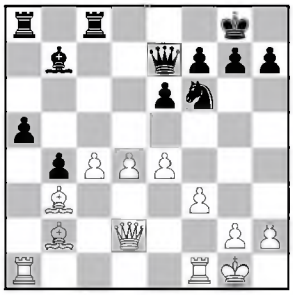
17...♘xd2 18.♕xd2 ♕e7 Liang demonstrates fine strategical vision. Instead of immediately pouncing on c4 with 18...♕c7, he connects his rooks and defends b4 in advance so as to enable the Noteboom trademark ...a5-a4 advance once an opportune moment arrives.

19.e4 Kantor, typical for any young player, now embarks on an ambitious central and kingside expansion, consisting of four consecutive pawn moves. Surprisingly, though, it also activates Liang's bishop on the long diagonal and this gradually proves to be the most significant factor in the position.

19...♖fc8 20.e5 Such an advance is almost impossible to resist, yet the sad outcome of the game for Kantor makes me consider other strategies – both more restricting for the b7 bishop and more gracious for the b2 bishop.

An alternative was 20.♗b3!?

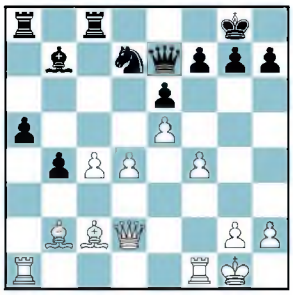
Jason Liang, Spring Chess Classic, St.Louis 2023. *Photo by Austin Fuller*



A) 20...♗c6 21.d5 a4 22.e5! displacing the black knight 22...♘e8 23.d6 ♕h4 24.g3 ♕d8 25.♗c2±.

B) 20...♘d7 21.♖a2 e5 22.♖fa1 ♕d8 23.♕e3±.

20...♘d7 21.f4 Continuing in the same optimistic vein. The player of the black pieces now needs to have the guts not to be intimidated by White's rapid expansion. With hindsight, an immediate 21.c5 may also be a candidate move in order to meet 21...♗d5 with 22.♗e4 as 21...♘xc5? 22.dxc5 ♕xc5+ 23.♖f2 doesn't work for Black.



21...g6! However, despite his tender age, Liang keeps his cool. On 21...♖xc4 Kantor must have planned 22.♗xh7+! ♔xh7 23.♕d3+ g6 24.♕xc4, when Black fails to regain his lost exchange by 24...♗a6 due to 25.♕c6.

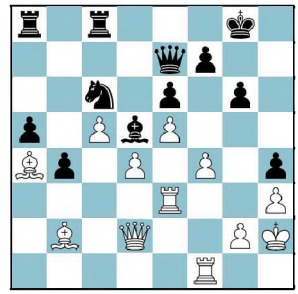
22.c5? It may be unfair to lay blame on this final pawn move of the faulty sequence of four, for the failure of Kantor's strategy, but now Liang proudly places his bishop in the very heart of the position, essentially turning its opposite colored number on b2 into a big pawn.

On the less rigid 22.♗d3 Kantor naturally disliked 22...a4, but perhaps he could then still continue 23.♖fb1, hoping for 23...a3? 24.♗xa3.

22...♗d5! 23.♗a4 ♘b8 24.h3 h5! Discouraging g2-g4.

25.♖ae1 ♘c6 26.♖e3 h4! Freezing White's kingside attack even further. If White doesn't break through, he has strategically little to hope for with his dark-squared bishop being miles away from f6.

27.♔h2



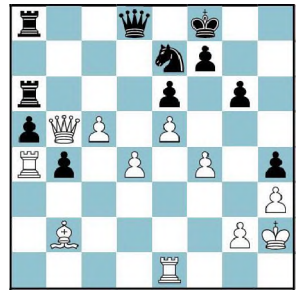
27...♔f8! One doesn't need to be either too old or too wise to be concerned by White's heavy major piece build-up on the kingside. With the text move Jason prepares to evacuate his king – an evacuation that later turns into a glorious king march across the board!

28.♖a1 Unable to break through Black's powerful defense, commanded by the bishop on d5, Kantor now goes over to defense. Black's strategical advantage has already become apparent, e.g. 28.g4 hxg3+ 29.♖xg3 ♔e8 30.f5 exf5 or 30...gxf5.

28...♕d8! A further display of excellent positional understanding for a 16-year-old. The e7 square is vacated for a knight maneuver, which will consolidate Black's grip on key squares of the board.

29.♕d3 ♘e7 30.♖ee1 ♗c6 With the d5 square under tight control of four of Black's pieces, Jason now begins to soften up White's blockade of his queenside assets. The d5 square will soon be taken over by another eager black piece.

31.♗xc6 ♖xc6 32.♕b5 ♖ca6 33.♖a4



33...♕e8! Forcing a trade of queens and subsequently dispelling White's last hope of an attack.

34.♕xe8+ ♔xe8 Now it's easy to foresee Black's forthcoming king walk to b5, from where it will invigorate his passed pawns. However what is much harder to foresee is that this king can march even beyond b5!

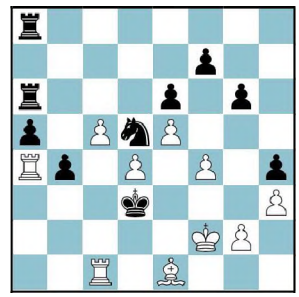
35.♔g1 ♘d5 Now establishing a fresh classic blockader, which in contrast to the previous one, may not only munch on f4, but also impede the white bishop by observing the c3 square.

36.♗c1 ♔d7 37.♗d2 ♔c6 38.♖ea1 ♔b5! With the arrival of Black's king on b5, the white rooks will now be confined to the queenside.

39.♔f2 ♔c4! Without losing any momentum, Jason now continues his king walk, both terrific and terrifying for his opponent. Kantor now faces the prospect of losing both his d4 and c5 pawns to the fearless black king. That said, the simple 39...b3 40.♖4a3 a4 must win easily too.

40.♖c1+ ♔d3! This deep invasion is more terrifying than the obvious 40...♔xd4 41.♔f3 (*41.c6 ♖c8*) 41...♖c6 42.♗e1. It's better to let the white bishop suffer buried under his own pawns.

41.♗e1 41.♖a2 b3 42.♖b2 a4 43.♔f3 a3 44.♖xb3+ ♔xd2 45.♖f1 ♔c2 wins thanks to the sheer force of the black king.

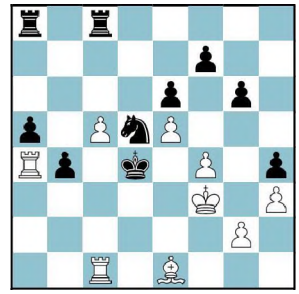


41...♔e4! And now we come to the pinnacle of Jason's breathtaking king march along the light squares from e8 via b5 to e4! Yet again this move not only displays the full power of the black king, but also serves important practical purposes. The f3 square is now denied to his frightened white counterpart.

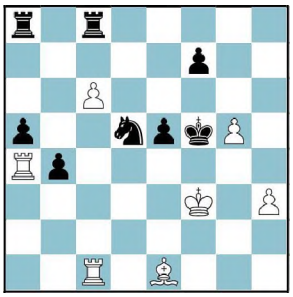
42.♗d2 ♖c6 43.♖d1 ♖cc8 44.♔e2 ♖cb8 With the center of the board completely claimed by Black's forceful play, nothing can save Kantor from imminent defeat. White has nowhere to run and, with his last move, Jason has prepared the ...b4-b3 advance under optimal conditions.

45.♖c1 ♔xd4 Ultimately the long-frozen white central pawn chain crumbles.

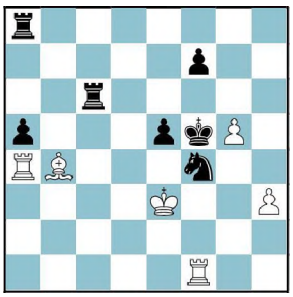
46.♔f3 ♖c8 47.♗e1



47...g5 48.fxg5 By now Kantor could have no doubt as to the fearlessness of his teenage opponent. 48.♗f2+ only invites in the black king further, i.e. 48...♔d3 49.fxg5 ♘c3 50.♖aa1 a4−+.
48...♔xe5 The result of a terrific royal promenade is liquidation of White's central pawns on d4 and e5. Well done, Jason!
49.g4 49.♗xh4 ♘c3 50.♖xc3 bxc3 51.♖c4 ♔d5 52.♖xc3 ♖xc5−+.
49...hxg3 50.♗xg3+ ♔f5 51.♗e1 e5 Bringing up fresh resources to put an end to Kantor's desperate defense.
52.c6



52...♘f4! Once the black king has fulfilled his principal role, the final episode now belongs to the knight.
53.♗d2 ♘d3 54.♖f1 54.♖c2 b3 55.♖c3 b2 56.♖b3 ♖ab8−+.
54...♖xc6 55.♔e3+ ♘f4 56.♗xb4 Have Black's mighty queenside pawns now all been eliminated?



56...♖d8! It turns out that this black rook has been lying in wait for 56 moves to finally deliver a lethal blow to the white king.
57.♖xa5 Allowing a straightforward finale, but by now White's position was beyond hope.
57...♖d3+ 58.♔f2 ♖c2+ and finally Kantor admitted defeat against his bright teenage opponent. **White resigned**.

The black knight, a joint hero of the fabulous king march, may be pinned but it nevertheless helps to efficiently deliver twin checkmates after 59.♔e1 ♖e2 and 59.♔g1 ♖g2+ 60.♔h1 ♖xh3. ■

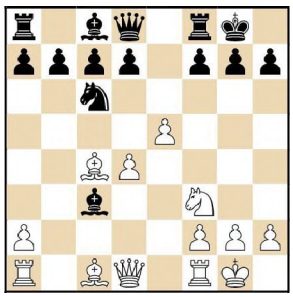
SMALL CHESS LECTURES

By GM Nikola Nestorovic

Our present lecture is dedicated to the policy of always choosing a counterthreat in response to direct threats. A very common motif for this type of decision is the existence of an undefended piece.

Nikola Nestorovic became a Grandmaster in 2016 and a FIDE Trainer in 2018. Still an active player, Nikola is mostly dedicated to chess teaching. Together with his father, IM Dejan, he co-authored two chess books – *The Power of Defence* and *The Art of Counterattack in 64 Pictures* and *Secrets of Positional Sacrifice*.

M.Aslanov
Hossein Aryanejad
U14 Asian Championship 1998

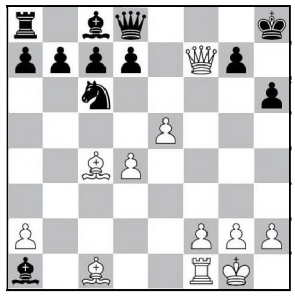


The bishop on c3 has just won a pawn and is now also threatening the white rook on a1. The question is: how to react?
11.♘g5!! The correct answer is a counterthreat! The idea is to combine checkmate threats with an attack on the vulnerable bishop. We can see that every undefended piece is a potential target for attack.

11.♗g5!? was another good counterthreat option. After 11...♕e8 12.♖b1 White has a huge advantage, which is reflected in his powerful center and pieces aiming at the black king.
11...♗xa1 Black wants to eliminate the potential threat to his bishop and in the process win material. 11...d5! was the best practical chance − combining defense with a counterthreat. Then 12.exd6! is the only game plan that allows White to launch an irresistible checkmating attack.

12...♗xa1 (*12...g6 13.♘xf7!!*+−) 13.♕h5 ♗f5 14.♗xf7+! ♔h8 (*14...♖xf7 15.♕xf7+ ♔h8 16.♕xf5 g6 17.♕b1! ♗xd4 18.♘f7++−*) 15.♘xh7!!+− By combining an attack on the f7 and h7 squares, White wins material while continuing his mating attack.
12.♕h5! White attacks two squares simultaneously and it is already difficult to offer Black good advice.
12...h6 The most logical reaction. 12...♕xg5 was the best way to defend the position. However, after a few correct moves, 13.♗xg5 ♗xd4 14.♗f6!, White easily comes up with an attack on Black's king.
13.♘xf7! The correct choice. It is important to note that after this move the threats continue.

On the other hand 13.♗xf7+? would be a bad way of creating a threat, and may even lead White into trouble after 13...♖xf7 14.♕xf7+ ♔h8 15.♘e4 ♕e7. The critical threats then disappear and Black can count on gaining the advantage.
13...♖xf7 14.♕xf7+ ♔h7 After 14...♔h8



A) 15.♗xh6? would be the wrong way to continue his plan of attack. After 15...gxh6 16.♖xa1 White has yet to prove his compensation for the sacrificed piece. (*16.♕f4* merely leads to perpetual check after *16...d5 17.♕xh6+ ♔g8 18.♕g6+ ♔f8 19.♕h6+*).
B) 15.♗g5!! An important tactical motif that ensures material gain or a checkmate for White in all lines, i.e. 15...♕xg5 16.♕g8 mate or 15...hxg5 16.♕h5 mate.
15.♗g5! The last threat! White will soon force a checkmate.
15...♕xg5 15...hxg5?? is met by 16.♕h5 mate while 15...d5 16.♗d3+ ♔h8 17.♗xd8 would also soon lead to checkmate.
16.♗d3+ ♔h8 17.♕f8 mate.

RISK MANAGEMENT IN CHESS

What is the price per move?

Winning in chess often relates directly to a mistake by either side. Is there a way to effectively lure your opponent to commit a mistake at any point while managing your own risk?

By Luca Barillaro

Luca Barillaro is doctor of economics, an independent financial consultant and trader residing in Modena, Italy. Luca is also an avid chess player, and thanks to his proficiency of using AI in chess preparation, his help was of benefit to several elite grandmasters and their teams.

Risk management in the financial markets is the main component of any successful strategy. In fact, there is no winning strategy that consistently manages to produce profits over a long period of time because the markets change their microstructure (the players, the rules and the technology present in the different trading venues), the themes change and the fashions change. Instead, what every good investor should do is to create a statistically reliable strategy combined with an iron discipline of sustainable risk management with respect to one's own risk tolerance.

The same goes in chess. Nobody can pretend to win with the same set of openings, in the same style and using the same strategies over a long period of time. Opponents change, fashions change and knowledge changes. All this without considering the tremendous impact of technology and information dissemination that shortened that period of time from months to even one day in chess.

Risk management in chess has become a major issue both in preparation and in over-the-board play due to the power of software and the information spreading at the speed of light. A novelty or an entire opening preparation could very well be used for months in the pre-internet era while today they are good for a tournament. Even lower rated opponents have access to very high level chess education and can learn to play main lines in a few days as knowledge that was once accessible only to a few professionals or GM's students is easily accessible to everyone. Managing the risk to fight a well-prepared opponent has increased dramatically.

Therefore, in order to have a stable performance it is necessary to adapt and evolve our game/tournament strategy. But beware! The more information – the more the noise! There is no short path to victory. You have to do your homework both in finance and in chess.

While the creation of a market entry/exit strategy is done through the training of neural networks on the historical series of prices of financial assets, risk management for the individual investor derives from his financial situation, his objectives and, last but not least, from his personal situation. A 30-year-old investor's risk tolerance will never be the same as the same person's when he/she turns 60.

The use of artificial intelligence has greatly improved the creation of risk management strategies through the study of financial markets and their volatility. We can generally divide the risk management process into four phases:

1. Identification of the investable universe (volatility and characteristics of the instruments compatible with the investor's risk tolerance)
2. Study of exploitable repetitive patterns (behavior of the other players both in the action (book) and in the reaction (price)
3. An a-priori elimination of too risky situations (probabilistic approach)
4. Out-of-sample testing.

In my experience as a second to GMs and teams, I brought the same approach to the players and coaches I worked with.

1. Identification of compatible openings for the character and the style of the player and the "price per move" of the chosen lines (volatility of the opening)
2. Study of opponents' patterns (piece probability distribution regardless of openings)
3. Elimination of direct engine lines (introduction of the "playable" concept and exploitation of the "drawback principle" against the opponent)
4. Engine vs. Engine test and out-of-sample retest.

The first point, which seems trivial, is actually a very complicated process when related to the concept of "price per move." When the price per move is very high, we are faced with a valuation volatility in the game that does not always adapt to the tournament situation and/or the player's character. Without a doubt, constantly playing lines with a high price per move is not only very tiring but also very risky. In financial jargon we could define it as "gambling." It may be good once, but in the end the House always wins.

The piece distribution tells us a lot about the style and habits of the opponents, in particular about their bias which often derives from their character and their chess training. The use of artificial intelligence allows the creation of an "avatar" of the opponent against which to test the lines chosen in point one.

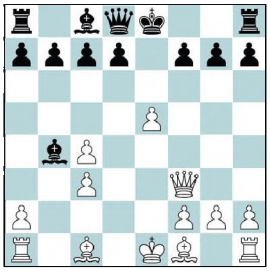
The use of patterns is known to be a hallmark of the GM decision making process and was explained perfectly in *Analyzing the Chess Mind* by Boris Gulko and Joel R. Sneed.

Point three helps not to enter the lines that have almost certainly also been analyzed by the opponent and his team. In ACM issue #31, World Correspondence Champion Jon Edwards underlined how correspondence chess players "should select opening variations that avoid long-forced sequences." Carlsen masterfully exploited this concept in the Dubai World Championship match against Nepomniachtchi by choosing "playable" and already tested lines among engines but not inferior compared to main lines. His challenger treasured the lesson and also began to use this strategy both in Madrid and in Astana together with the use of the "drawback principle" on the opponent.

The drawback principle has been explained very well by the strong coach,

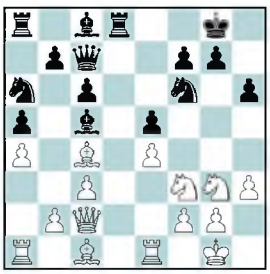
Indian GM Ramesh in his latest book *Improve Your Chess Calculation*. Each opponent's move has a purpose, but also often a disadvantage (stops protecting a square or a piece, takes a square away from another piece, changes the pawn structure thus not enabling some maneuvers that were previously dangerous or disadvantageous for us, etc.). This disadvantage should help us in choosing candidate moves for our response. Often, through the engines equipped with neural networks, it is possible to find moves whose refutation is not the one deriving from the application of the "drawback principle" by our opponent. In other words, the opponent is provoked to play a line that apparently exploits the disadvantage just granted by our move but in reality, that line (despite being "human") is not the correct one.

In the recent World Championship match between Liren Ding and Ian Nepomniachtchi, we had several examples of this strategy.



In game 10, this position was reached after White's 9th move. Here, 9...♗c5 seems to be inferior, because by no longer attacking the c3 pawn (compared to the "normal looking" 9...♗a5) it allows White to prevent Black's castling thanks to 10.♕g3. Nonetheless, White does not obtain any appreciable advantage if they set up their pieces to try to prevent the liberating move ...d7-d6 as it would seem logical and as it happens in the main line with 9...♗a5.

Again, in game 9, the following position was reached after move 15.

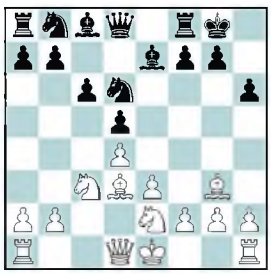


The retreat 16.♗a2 seems to allow Black's 16...b5 thrust, which in reality is not the best continuation (16...♗f8! is best), because after 17.♕e2 (which is one of the first engine lines instead of 16.♗a2) Black will have to defend the b5 pawn with the rook, leaving the bishop on c8 tied down to the defense of the knight on a6 and preventing the ...♗e6 theme, thus allowing White to maneuver ♘f3-h4-g6.

The search for these "nuances" allows you to create a situation of unbalance by reducing the risks to enter an engine line already studied by your opponent, and increasing the probability of obtaining an advantage even if in absolute terms we are not playing the best moves.

Lastly, an out-of-sample testing is required which is carried out through matches/tournaments between engines from the starting positions of interest to us. First of all, engines with different styles and with different settings are selected (some positional, some more tactical) all equipped with a "concurring experience" and a probabilistic approach. Once the match trees are obtained, the most played continuations in the tournament/match are tested against an engine that has not participated in the tournament/match equipped with the style of our opponent (avatar).

Recently I performed this drill at a training camp with two strong GMs on the Carlsbad line 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.♗g5 c6 6.e3 h6 7.♗h4 ♗e7 8.♗d3 0-0 9.♘ge2 ♘e8!? 10.♗g3 ♘d6.



The line is very interesting because the price per move is not high and the plans and patterns are often similar to other lines but are never as clear as in other lines. If White plays by pattern, he can end up in an inferior position and in any case fail to develop the classic minority attack (indeed, it is often Black who attacks on the queenside).

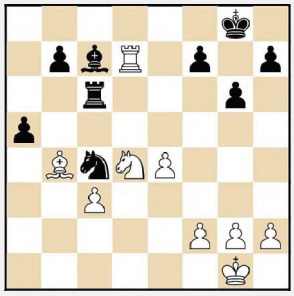
Improving risk management is not a guarantee of victory (just as it is not a guarantee of positive performance on the markets), but it is certainly a fundamental step in making our chess preparation more professional, solid and sustainable in the long term. A too volatile performance is, in fact, very difficult to sustain both for a chess player and for an investor.

SMALL CHESS LECTURES

By GM Nikola Nestorovic

Liviu-Dieter Nisipeanu	2654
Caruana Fabiano	2805

Dortmund 2015



White has just played 28.♘d4, threatening to win material. If he had foreseen what was to follow, he would probably have settled for 28.♗e7!?, putting up resistance in an inferior position.

28...axb4!! The response is a counterthreat!

29.♘xc6 b3! 30.♖xc7 30.♖d1 is met by 30...bxc6−+ while 30.♘b4 loses to 30... b2 31.♖d1 ♘d2/a3.

30...♘d6!! **White resigned**

In American Chess Magazine issue #31, on page 78 the top photo caption identifies the player as Jerjis Kapra (the opponent in the game annotated by Adam Dorrance). This player is actually Brian Zhang, who has no game shown in the article. On page 83, the top photo caption shows the player on the right as Jean Hartman, but he is actually Brian Hartman.
We apologize for these unintentional errors pointed out by NM Roger Langen, the author of the article.

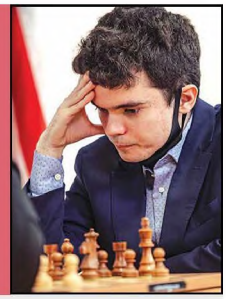
ACM Editorial Team

HOW TO PROPERLY EVALUATE THE POSITION?

Piece Activity

The dynamic potential of a position is mostly determined by piece activity. However, as these dynamics can change very quickly, a player should be aware that they continually need to be properly assessed so as not to drift into an inferior position.

By GM Illia Nyzhnyk



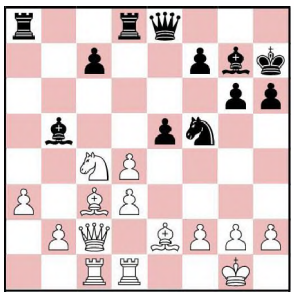
Born in Ukraine in 1996, **Illia Nyzhnyk** became a Grandmaster in 2011 before moving to the U.S. As a member of Webster University's SPICE program since 2014, he contributed to numerous championship victories. Illia also won several individual titles, including the 2020 Spice Cup Open and four World Opens. After obtaining his MBA in December 2021, he is now fully dedicated to advancing his chess skills.

Welcome back to the series on how to evaluate positions properly, and what to look for during this process. In ACM #32, we discovered how king safety affects the evaluation, and this time we will be looking at another factor – piece activity.

It seems there are a few misconceptions with regard to the importance of piece activity in relation to material, as well as the importance of preventing your opponent's piece activity. To be honest, I have also found myself making similar misjudgements, and here I would like to show you, fellow readers, how very often keeping your pieces active and not going for immediate material gain can result in a far greater long-term benefit. Equally, making sure that your opponent's pieces are at bay can save you a headache or two. In the following critical position, Black has multiple recapture options. However it is extremely important to understand what it is that Black needs to be aiming for.

Bogdan-Daniel Deac	2710
V. Pranav	2530

Romanian Superliga 2022

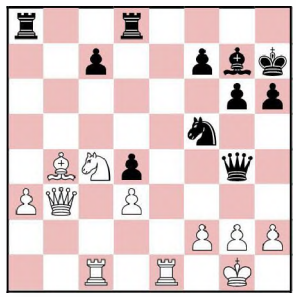


25...exd4? Although this move allows Black to immediately regain his lost material, it also solidifies the pawn structure in White's favor.

25...♖xd4?! does not commit White to any particular response, but does leave Black with options of playing on the open d-file. 26.♗f3 ♖ad8 27.♗e4+–.

25...♘xd4! would be the correct way to go. This forces White to trade his dark-squared bishop, which automatically gives Black additional compensation thanks to his newly acquired advantage of the bishop pair, together with some pressure on the d-file. 26.♗xd4 ♖xd4 27.♘d2 c6 28.♘f3 ♖d5 29.♗f1 f5∞.

26.♗b4 ♗a4 27.b3 ♗xb3 28.♕xb3 ♕xe2 29.♖e1 ♕g4



Upon an extremely brief examination, it may appear that Black has not only regained his pawn, but also managed to create play against the white king. However...

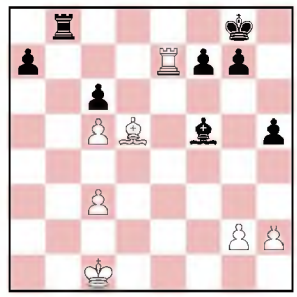
30.♘e5! and Black is forced to submit to a trade that leaves his position in ruins.

30...♗xe5 31.♖xe5 ♖d7 32.h3 ♕f4 33.♖ce1 ♖ad8 34.♕c4 Unable to find a move, Black decided to give up material in order to free some of his pieces, but unfortunately it was too late. **Black lost** shortly afterwards.

In endgames most of the time we make an unconscious decision to go for extra material, knowing that it will likely result in a critical advantage. However, there still exist multiple cases where this strategy is not the best way to continue.

Aram Hakobyan	2613
Grigoriy Oparin	2683

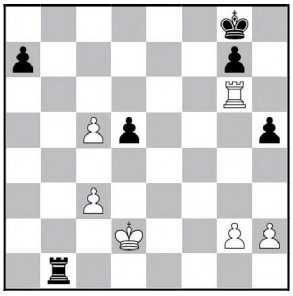
Fall Chess Classic-A, St Louis 2022



Such was the case in this example where a good friend of mine, Grandmaster Aram Hakobyan, attempted to win a pawn.

32.♗xf7+?! Unfortunately, White did not realize that due to the activity of Black's pieces it will be impossible to maintain his material advantage.

32.♖xf7! would have been the best attempt to win the game. This move requires an extremely precise calculation that goes deep into the rook endgame: 32...♖b1+ 33.♔d2 ♗g6 34.♖f6+ cxd5 35.♖xg6



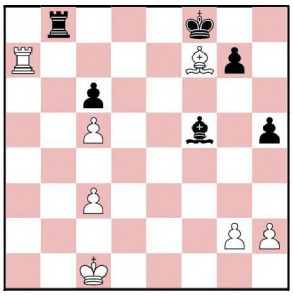
A) Now 35...♖b5 would have been the most likely continuation. Then after 36.♖c6! a5 37.♔d3

A1) 37...a4? is extremely logical, but runs into a beautiful winning pattern by White: 38.♔d4 ♖a5 39.♖e6!! a3 40.c6 ♔f7 (*40...a2 41.♖e1! a1♕ 42.♖xa1 ♖xa1 43.c7 ♖a8 44.♔xd5 ♔f7 45.♔c6 ♔e6 46.♔b7+−*) 41.c7 ♖a8 42.♖a6 ♖c8 43.♖a7+−.

A2) Better is 37...♔f7! 38.♔d4 ♖b2 39.♔xd5 (*39.♔e5 ♖xg2 40.♖c7+ ♔e8 41.c6 ♖g6* should hold for Black.) 39...♖xg2 40.♖d6 ♖d2+ 41.♔c6 ♖xh2 42.♔b6 ♖b2+ 43.♔xa5 ♖a2+ 44.♔b6 ♖b2+ 45.♔a7 ♖a2+ 46.♔b7 ♖b2+ 47.♖b6 ♖xb6+ 48.♔xb6 h4 49.c6 h3 50.c7 h2 51.c8♕ h1♕ 52.♕f5+ and although the engine claims that White is winning, I have serious doubts about that.

B) Instead after 35...♔f7! 36.♖g5 ♔e6 37.♖xg7 ♖b5 38.♔d3 ♖xc5 39.♖h7 a5 looks like Black might hold, but this line is extremely difficult to understand from the practical standpoint, and thus would have been an unlikely choice.

32...♔f8 33.♖xa7



33...♖b5?! Seemingly Black might have 'believed' White too much, and decided to defend an endgame a pawn down. However, there was absolutely no need for that, as after the simple 33...g6!= Black has two powerful threats, ...♖b5, and ...♖b1-b2, which allow him to immediately regain his lost pawn.

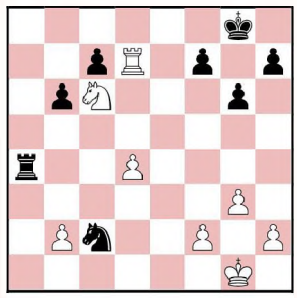
34.♗xh5 ♖xc5 35.♔d2 ♗e4 36.♖a8+ ♔e7 37.♖e8+ ♔f6 38.♖xe4 ♖xh5 39.h3 and **White** eventually **won**...

As we have discussed a few cases where piece activity is far more important than material, let's now discuss how important it is to ensure that our opponent's pieces do not reach the squares where they really want to be.

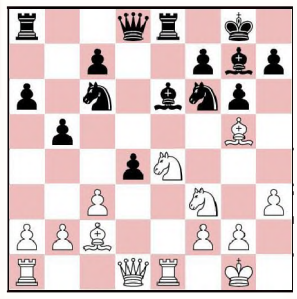
EXERCISES FOR SOLVING

And now it is time for a few exercises. I am challenging you to apply the concept we have just discussed to solve the following puzzles – but be careful as there are a lot of false leads here!

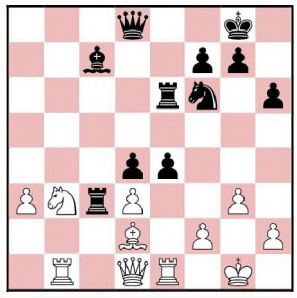
1. Black to move



2. White to move



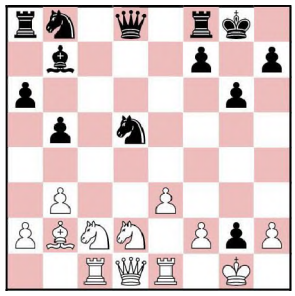
3. Black to move



Solutions on page 65

Magnus Carlsen	2856
Nils Grandelius	2651

Meltwater Champions Tour, Internet 2022

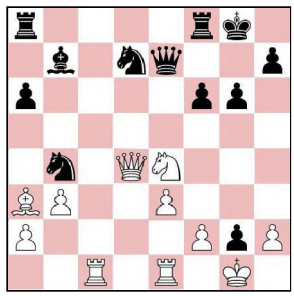


In this position, Black clearly underestimated the importance of White's idea and played **17...♘d7?!** I could argue that most of us would make this kind of move with our eyes closed − it develops a piece, takes care of a couple of key squares in the center, and allows a further repositioning in case this knight should want to go to f6. However, it does not solve Black's main problem, and I guess that Grandelius failed to recognize he has a problem at all.

17...♖e8! was a must to ensure that the white knight does not get to e4, which is objectively and practically the best possible square for the knight. Then after 18.♘f3 ♘d7 19.♕d4 f6 20.♖ed1 ♕e7+ we would reach a position similar to that which occurred in the game, but with no clear follow-up for White.

18.♘e4! All of a sudden, Black is faced with having to defend against multiple threats. Fortunately, he can do so and the game proceeded with **18...♕e7 19.♕d4 f6 20.♗a3** Now it is apparent why it would have been better for Black to move his rook away from the f8 square on move 17.

20...b4 21.♘xb4 ♘xb4

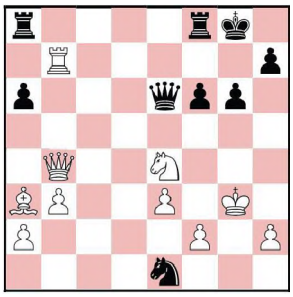


22.♖c7!? Magnus endeavors to improve the positions of each one of his pieces as much as possible, on the understanding

that he can always regain his lost piece - which is true!

22.♘d2 was another attractive option, but does not look as appealing as the game move. 22...♖f7 23.♗xb4 ♕e6 24.f4∞.

22...♕e6 23.♖xb7 ♘e5 24.♕xb4 ♘f3+ 25.♔xg2 ♘xe1+ 26.♔g3



26...♕f5?? Black cracks under the pressure. Despite the fact that White is the exchange down, this is offset by his piece activity in conjunction with the vulnerability of the black king. Therefore White has more than enough to claim full compensation.

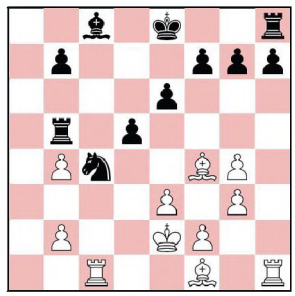
26...♖ae8! would have been the correct approach, on which might have followed 27.♘d6 ♕e5+ 28.♕f4 ♕xf4+ 29.♔xf4 ♘d3+ 30.♔g3 ♖e6 31.♖c7 h5∞.

27.f4! ♖ae8 28.♕c4+ ♔h8 29.♗xf8 ♖xf8 30.♕c7 Black resigned.

In some cases, we have to make a choice – either to activate our own pieces or else ensure that our opponent's pieces cannot perform to their best ability.

Harika Dronavalli	2507
Anna Muzychuk	2522

FIDE Women's Grand Prix, Munich 2023



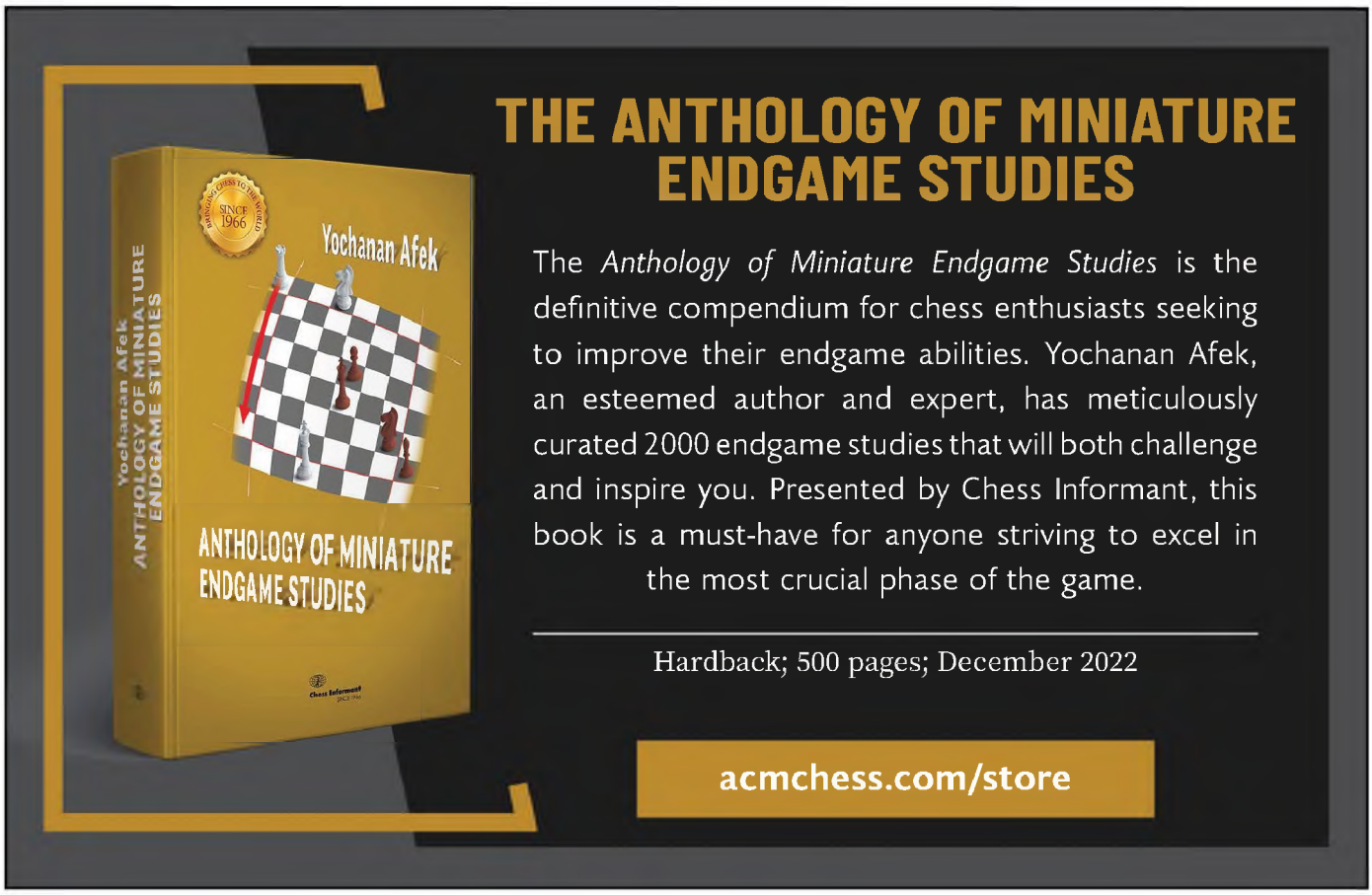
In this position, Black played **18...e5?**, which loosened her pawn structure and allowed the white bishops to perform to their maximum.

The correct move was 18...♖xb4!, maintaining Black's intact pawn structure, as well as the extra pawn. Then 19.♗e5 0-0 20.♗c3 ♖b3∓.

19.♗xe5! ♗xg4+ 20.♔e1 Even though Black has managed to develop her light-squared bishop, her position is suddenly in ruins.

20...f6 21.♗c3 ♖b6 22.b3 ♘e5 23.f4 ♘f7 and **White won** shortly after.

To summarize, when evaluating positions we need to take into consideration the activity of both our own and our opponent's pieces, and we should never forget that quite often piece activity may outweigh any immediate material gains!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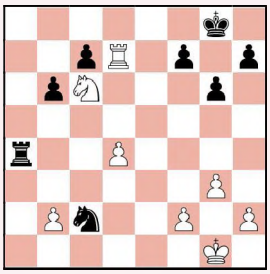
Yochanan Afek
ANTHOLOGY OF MINIATURE ENDGAME STUDIES

Solutions to EXERCISES on page 63

1. BLACK TO MOVE

Peter Michalik 2577
Marco Baldauf 2501

Bundesliga 2022



26...♖c4 Best was 26...♖a1+!. It is essential to take the b2 pawn out of the equation, as that would allow Black to create a passed pawn of his own, as well as enable him to place his rook in an active position on the second rank. 27.♔g2 ♖b1 28.♖xc7 ♖xb2 29.♔f3 ♘e1+ 30.♔e3 ♘c2+ 31.♔e4 ♘a3 32.d5 ♘b5 33.♖c8+ ♔g7∞.

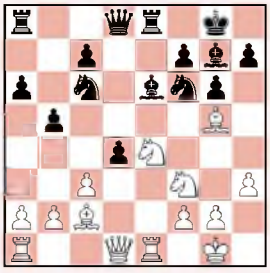
27.♖xc7 ♔g7 28.d5 ♘b4 Black probably calculated this far, thinking that his position would be fine. However...

29.♖xf7+! ♔xf7 30.♘e5+ ♔f6 31.♘xc4 ♘xd5 32.♔f1 b5 33.♘a3 ♘c7 34.♔e2 ♔e5 35.♔d3 and **White won**.

2. WHITE TO MOVE

Nodirbek Abdusattorov 2713
Parham Maghsoodloo 2719

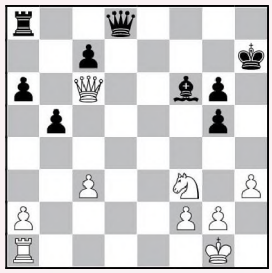
Tata Steel Masters, Wijk aan Zee 2023



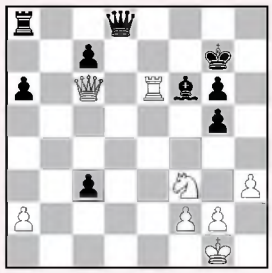
It is obvious that White's pieces are exerting a lot of pressure, specifically against the pinned f6 knight. In such cases, it is usually better to avoid unnecessary exchanges, as that would only help your opponent to relieve the pressure.

17.♗b3? This gives Black just enough time to rid himself of the annoying pin.

17.cxd4! was a must, and now, despite the fact that Black gains control over the outpost on d5, the threats are just too overwhelming. 17...♘b4 (*17...h6* loses by force to *18.♗xf6 ♗xf6 19.d5! ♗xb2 20.♖b1+−* and Black loses a piece.) 18.♗b3 Surprisingly, Black does not even get to place a piece on d5, as that would lose instantly. 18...♗xb3 (*18...♘bd5? 19.♗xd5! ♗xd5 20.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 21.♖xe8+ ♕xe8 22.♗xf6+−*) 19.♕xb3 ♘bd5 20.♘e5! ♖e6 21.♖ac1 h6 22.♗xf6 ♗xf6 23.♘c6 ♕d7 24.♕xd5 ♕xd5 25.♘xf6+ ♖xf6 26.♘e7++−. **17...h6! 18.♗xe6 ♖xe6 19.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 20.♖xe6 fxe6 21.♕e2 hxg5 22.♕xe6+ ♔h7 23.♕xc6 dxc3 24.bxc3** In such an unclear position, Black's smartest choice would have been to activate his rook by means of the maneuver ...♖b8-b6.



24...♖b8! 24...b4?! happened in the game, and although Black is winning a pawn in this way, the fact that the black rook is still on a8 could potentially be his undoing. 25.♖e1! bxc3 26.♖e6 ♔g7



A) 27.♕e4! ♕d7 (*27...♖b8?? 28.♘e5!+−*) 28.♖xf6 ♔xf6 29.♕xa8 ♕d1+ 30.♔h2 c2 31.♕f8+ ♔e6 32.♕e8+ ♔d6 33.♕xg6+ ♔c5 34.♘e1! c1♕ 35.♘d3+ ♕xd3 36.♕xd3 ♕f4+ 37.♔g1 ♕c1+ 38.♕f1± and White is the one trying to win with his extra pawn.

B) In the game 27.♘e5?! was played, overlooking a nice resource. 27...♕d1+ 28.♔h2 ♗xe5+ 29.♖xe5 ♕d6 30.♕xc3 ♖e8 31.f4

B1) 31...♖xe5 32.fxe5 ♕e7 33.e6+ ♔g8 34.♕c6 (*34.♕e5 a5*) 34...♕d6+ 35.♕xd6 cxd6 36.♔g3 ♔g7 37.♔g4 ♔f6 38.e7 ♔xe7 39.♔xg5 ♔f7 (*39...♔e6 40.h4 d5 41.♔f4*) 40.g4 d5 41.h4 ♔g7 42.h5 gxh5 43.gxh5 ♔h7 44.♔f5 ♔h6 45.♔e5 ♔xh5 46.♔xd5.

B2) 31...♔f8 32.♖xg5 ♕xf4+ 33.♖g3 ♖e6 34.♔g1 ♔g8 and even though **Black** had managed to equalize, he **lost** the game as a consequence of time pressure.

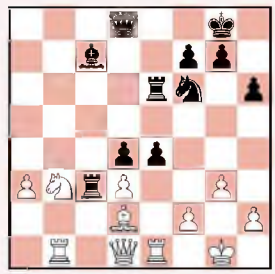
25.♕xa6 25.♖e1 ♖b6 26.♕c5 ♖d6 27.c4 ♖d1 28.cxb5 ♖xe1+ 29.♘xe1 axb5 30.♕xb5 ♕d1 31.♔f1 ♗c3 32.♕e2 ♕a1 33.♕e7+ ♔h6= with a relatively simple draw after Black regains his lost pawn by capturing on e1 and then on a2.

25...b4 26.♖b1 ♖a8 27.♕c4 bxc3∞ which would have been anyone's game.

3. BLACK TO MOVE

Parham Maghsoodloo 2719
Vincent Keymer 2696

Tata Steel Masters, Wijk aan Zee 2023



This puzzle is another one of 'those' – Black is faced with a multiple choice: whether to take on d3 with a pawn, with a rook, or run back to c6. Which one do you think is practically best?

25...exd3? was chosen by Black in the game, leading by force to an endgame which may be assessed as approximately equal.

Instead 25...♖xd3! would have been an important dynamic material sacrifice. Then 26.♘c5 ♖xd2! 27.♕xd2 ♖e5 28.♖ec1 d3∓ when Black's position is dominating, although it will still take some effort to transform his advantage into a win.

25...♖cc6 is second best, but it looks like White might be able to construct a fortress after 26.dxe4 ♘xe4 27.♕f3 ♕d5 28.♗b4 ♗b6 29.♘d2 f5 30.♖b3∓.

26.♖xe6! fxe6 27.♘xd4! ♕xd4 28.♗xc3 ♕xc3 29.♖b3 ♕c6 30.♕xd3 ♘e4 31.♕e2 ♗d6 32.♖e3 ♘xf2 33.♔xf2 Draw.

THE MAGNIFICENT 3
Remarkable Recent Games

By GM Sarunas Sulskis

2

Christopher Yoo. *Photo by Austin Fuller*
Abhimanyu Mishra. *Photo by Crystal Fuller*
Spring Chess Classic, St.Louis 2023.

TWO U.S. JUNIORS WAGE A WILD WEST DUEL!

My next choice is a game played between Christopher Yoo and Abhimanyu Mishra. U.S. chess, energetically propelled by the unceasing efforts of the Saint Louis Chess Club, now has an impressive array of young talents. Just take 14-year-old grandmaster Abhimanyu as a telling example! Yet they must all fight their inner battle for their place in the sun. And they do ... yes, they deliver!

In the aforementioned game Yoo was poised to crush his younger opponent right out of the opening in a sharp classic Najdorf Sicilian. A powerful center break 16.e5! set the scene for an upcoming 17.♘xe6! blast. However, Mishra didn't wait to get struck by lightning and unloaded a piece sacrifice of his own: 16...♘xe5!. From this point on, the game defied any normal means of assessment. Christopher pursued an attack on his opponent's king, whereas Abhimanyu banked on his awesome five-pawn-strong central phalanx. In addition to the two original queens, five more were promoted – only to find themselves quickly leaving the board. One of the most incredible games I've ever seen!

B99

Christopher Yoo	2591
Abhimanyu Mishra	2548

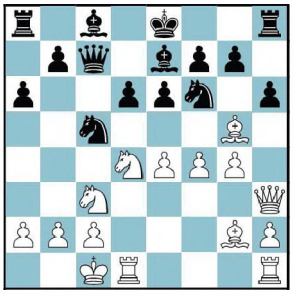
Spring Chess Classic - A, St.Louis, 2023

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗g5 e6 7.f4 ♗e7 8.♕f3 ♕c7 9.0-0-0 ♘bd7 10.g4 It's a classical Sicilian Najdorf. Although 6.♗g5 is quite an old variation, it has never really left the stage.

10...h6 Black follows a modern trend. 10...b5 11.♗xf6, followed usually by g4-g5, has historically been the most frequently seen continuation.

11.♕h3 This pin of the pawn is quite a rare idea, and it might possibly have caught the youngest player in the Group-A Tournament off guard. In Round 7 of the same Spring Chess Classic, Swiercz went for the customary 11.♗xf6 ♗xf6, but failed to impress after 12.h4 ♘b6 13.g5 ♗xd4 14.♖xd4 ♕c5, which later ended in a draw on move 42 in D.Swiercz 2646 - A.Mishra 2548, St. Louis 2023.

11...♘c5 12.♗g2



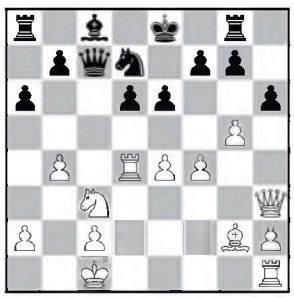
12...♖g8?! In my humble view, voluntarily renouncing short castling for good adds legitimacy to the 11.♕h3 idea. After 12...♗d7 13.♖he1 (*13.♗xf6 ♗xf6 14.g5?? ♗xd4 15.♖xd4 e5 16.♘d5 ♕d8* nets Black a rook.) 13...0-0-0 Black could have attacked the white bishop on g5 without the need for artificial play.

13.♗xf6 ♗xf6 With a black rook in an awkward position on g8, Christopher now spots a smart tactical idea and proceeds resolutely towards its execution.

14.b4! First the black knight is pushed back to obstruct its own bishop on c8.

14...♘d7 15.g5 Designed to give the queen access to h7, but first and foremost to e6!

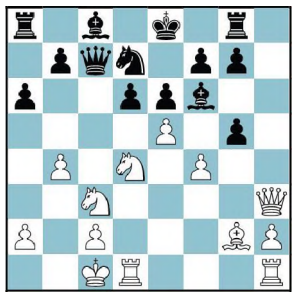
15...hxg5 By this stage Mishra must have foreseen his counter-sacrifice. The alternative is 15...♗xd4 16.♖xd4



A) 16...e5? Black needs to really have some guts to allow the white knight to go to d5. After 17.♘d5 ♕c6 18.♕h4 exd4 19.gxh6, although a full rook down, White has a ferocious attack.

B) 16...hxg5 17.♖hd1 gxf4 (*17...g4? 18.♕d3+–*) 18.♖xd6 ♘e5 19.♕h7 ♖f8 20.♕xg7 ♕xc3 21.♖d8+ ♔e7 22.♕xf8+ ♔f6 23.♕h8+ will soon end in a checkmate.

16.e5! With a second pawn sac, Yoo now comes close to a charming conclusion of his combination. Mishra, however, remains alert and in the nick of time intercepts the final strike.



16...♘xe5! 16...dxe5? 17.♘xe6 fxe6 (*17...♕c4* is, of course, more resilient but one needs nerves of steel to tread the path of *18.♗d5 ♕xb4 19.♘c7+*) 18.♕xe6+ ♔f8 19.♗d5+– winning beautifully.

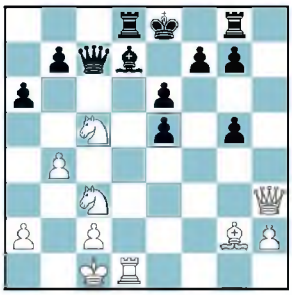
17.fxe5 ♗xe5 18.♖he1 Materially speaking, the position is still balanced, but with all the white pieces well placed for a fight, and the black rook misplaced on g8, Yoo has excellent chances to decisively conclude the attack.

18...♗d7 19.♖xe5! The black bishop, stationed in the very center of the board, is too great a nuisance for White to bear. Now the material scale tips in Black's favor, but Yoo nevertheless continues to fervently pursue his attack.

19...dxe5 20.♘b3 ♖d8 The 'king in the center' strategy has its share of drawbacks,

too. On 20...0-0-0 Mishra obviously feared 21.♘a5 ♗c6 22.♘xc6. Yet, after a trade of rooks, I think he could have tolerated the lasting damage to his pawn structure following 22...♖xd1+ 23.♘xd1 bxc6 24.♘c3±.

21.♘c5



21...♗c8?! This passive defense leaves Mishra's pieces dangerously confined. Apparently he distrusted 21...♗c6 due to a possible strike on e6, but I'm not sure White can find the right moment to carry this out. 22.♖f1 (*22.♘xe6 ♖xd1+ 23.♘xd1 fxe6 24.♕xe6+ ♔f8–+*) 22...♗xg2 23.♕xg2 b6 24.♘5e4 f5 25.♕xg5 ♖d4 26.♘f6+ ♔f7 27.♘xg8 ♕xc3 28.♕e7+ ♔xg8 29.♕xe6+ ♔h8 30.♕e8+ ♔h7 31.♕h5+ ♔g8 32.♕e8+ leads to an awesome perpetual.

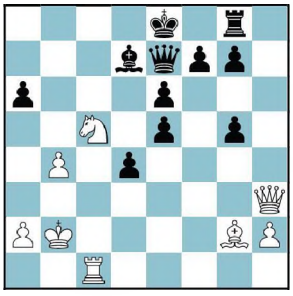
22.♖f1 ♖d4 23.♘3e4 b6 The position remains one of utmost complexity. On 23...♖xb4 24.♕h7 ♔f8 25.♘xg5 (*25.♗h3* is met by *25...♕b6;* but the more subtle *25.♕g6!* keeps White's attack going.) is repelled by 25...♖f4.

24.c3 On 24.♕h7 ♔f8 25.♘xg5 Black holds by 25...♖f4!

24...bxc5 25.cxd4 cxd4+ 26.♔b2 The imbalance has increased even further. Due to the better engaged white pieces, Mishra's position remains critical.

26...♕e7 27.♖c1! ♗d7 27...♕xb4+ nets Black a fifth pawn for the piece. Yet, due to the clumsiness of his rook on g8, he will find it hard to coordinate his pieces after, for example, 28.♔a1 ♗d7 29.♖b1 ♕a5 30.♖b8+ ♔e7 31.♖xg8 ♕e1+ 32.♔b2 ♕e2+ 33.♔a3+–.

28.♘c5

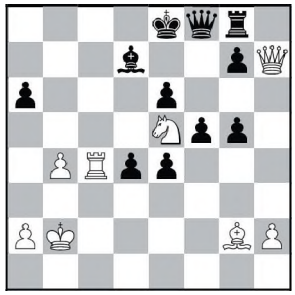


28...f5 Naturally, Mishra endeavors to set his massive pawn phalanx in motion, but in doing so further exposes his king.

29.♕h7 ♕f7 29...♔f7 30.♗f3 g4 31.♗xg4! allows Black no respite.

30.a4 30.♘b7 lets Black off the hook after 30...♔e7 31.♖c7 ♖c8.

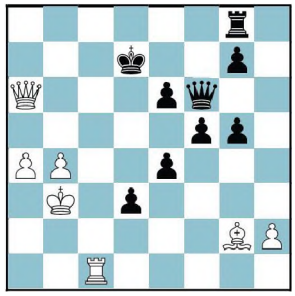
On the other hand, I think Christopher missed a forced win here by 30.♘d3 e4 31.♘e5 ♕f8 32.♖c4!



32...d3 33.♔b3!+– with a near-perfect coordination of White's pieces.

30...♔e7 31.♕h3 Allowing Black a sigh of relief.

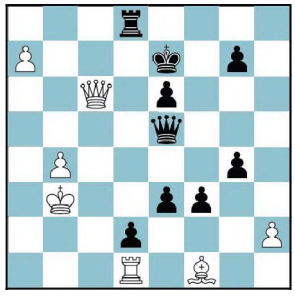
31...♕f6 32.♘xd7 ♔xd7 33.♕d3 e4 34.♕xa6 d3+ 35.♔b3



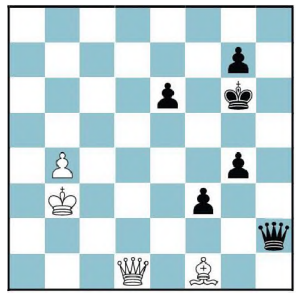
35...♖d8! Black's position remains critical, but first he needs to avoid being immediately checkmated..

36.a5 d2 37.♖d1 ♔e7 38.♗f1 ♕e5 A wild west fight, possibly in a time scramble, now rages. The unusual position defies any assessment, so I will spare you any comments and allow you to just enjoy the action.

39.♕c4 f4 40.a6 f3 41.♕c6 g4 42.a7 e3 Sheer madness!



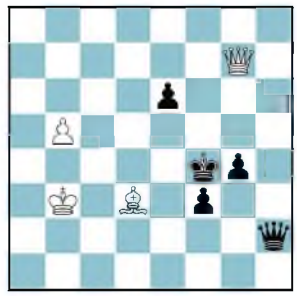
43.♕b7+ ♔f6 44.a8♕ ♖xa8 45.♕xa8 e2 46.♕d8+ ♔g6 47.♕xd2 exd1♕+ 48.♕xd1 ♕xh2 White is probably still in the driving seat, but with those well advanced black pawns it's never going to be an easy ride.



49.♕d3+ ♔g5 50.♕d8+ ♔f4 The e6 pawn now proves very useful.

51.♕d4+ ♔f5! Very good judgment! Respecting the safety of his king, Abhimanyu now deflects the white bishop and then gains access to the hot g2 square. 51...♔g3?? is strictly out of bounds due to 52.♕e5+, whereas 51...♔g5 52.♕xg7+ ♔f4 53.♕d4+ leaves the g7 pawn perishing without a sound.

52.♗d3+ ♔g5 53.♕xg7+ ♔f4! 54.b5 On 54.♕d4+ Black is no longer denied access to g3: 54...♔g3 55.♕e5+ ♔g2.



54...♕g1! The only move that holds for Black.

55.♕f7+ 55.♕c7+ e5 56.b6 ♕d1+ 57.♗c2 ♕d5+ 58.♕c4+ ♕xc4+ 59.♔xc4 g3 60.b7 g2 61.b8♕ g1♕= is also a draw.

55...♔g3 56.♕c7+ ♔h3 57.b6 ♕d1+ 58.♗c2 ♕d5+ 59.♔b4 ♕d4+ 60.♔a3 f2 61.♕h7+ ♔g2 62.♕e4+ ♕xe4 63.♗xe4+ ♔g1 64.♗d3 g3 65.b7 g2 66.b8♕ f1♕ 67.♗xf1 gxf1♕ Draw agreed.

A truly epic battle between two star American juniors!

IN MEMORY OF **ANDRAS ADORJAN** (1950–2023)

A Scorpion's Sting

Grandmaster Andras Adorjan was one of the strongest Hungarian players in the second half of the 20th century. His contributions to chess range from original opening theory to deep understanding of the endgame – as shown by the following examples from his play in this farewell article.

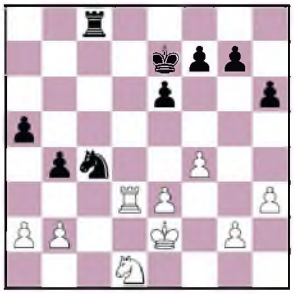
▲ Andras Adorjan, Beverwijk 1972 *Photo by Bert Verhoeff*

I was sad to learn of the death of the Hungarian grandmaster Andras Adorjan. I did not know him and probably only saw him a few times. But, like many of my peers who played solidly but for a win with the black pieces, I found inspiration in his approach to chess. Later, he became almost synonymous with the phrase "Black is OK!", after publishing a number of books with that and similar titles.

His contributions to the Gruenfeld Defense, Sveshnikov Variation of the Sicilian Defense and the Hedgehog offered many openings for active players to choose from. Andras Adorjan was only 73 when he died on May 11, 2023. When one thinks of his best games, fierce attacks and counterattacks come to mind – usually with a scorpion's sting somewhere near the end. As we shall see, those scorpions bit with equal venom in the ending.

Tibor Tolnai	2495
Andras Adorjan	2550

Hungarian Championship 1992

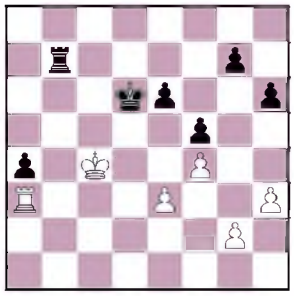


Adorjan was in the process of nursing a small advantage when his younger rival lost his sense of danger.

33.a3?? ♘**xb2! 34.**♘**xb2** ♖**c2+ 35.**♔**f3** After 35.♖d2 ♖xd2+ 36.♔xd2 bxa3 the pawn queens. Combinations ending with this queenside pawn attacking the knight on b2 should be part of your endgame arsenal.

35...♖**xb2 36.axb4** ♖**xb4** and Black is winning, thanks to his favorable rook and king position.

37.♖**c3** ♖**b7 38.**♖**a3** ♖**a7 39.**♔**e4** ♔**d6 40.**♔**d4 a4 41.**♔**c4 f5 42.**♔**b5** ♖**b7+ 43.**♔**c4** ♖**a7 44.**♔**b5** ♖**b7+ 45.**♔**c4**

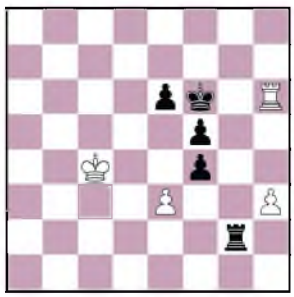


45...♖**b2** 45...♖c7+ 46.♔d4 ♖a7 47.♔c4 ♔c6 is more precise, but the text was well-calculated.

46.♖**xa4** 46.g4 ♖b3! 47.♖xb3 axb3 48.♔xb3 ♔d5 49.♔c3 ♔e4 50.♔d2 ♔f3.

46...♖**xg2 47.**♖**a7 g5! 48.**♖**a6+** ♔**e7 49.**♖**a7+** ♔**f6 50.**♖**h7** ♔**g6 51.**♖**e7** ♔**f6**

52.♖**h7 gxf4 53.**♖**xh6+**



53...♔**g7!** As usual, the grandmaster finishes the game elegantly.

54.♖**xe6 f3 White resigned**, as 55.♔d3 loses immediately to 55...♖g1.

Andras Adorjan's peak was probably in 1979, when he placed third in the Riga Interzonal, thereby qualifying for the Candidates', despite ranking in the bottom half by rating in that tournament and not regarded as a contender.

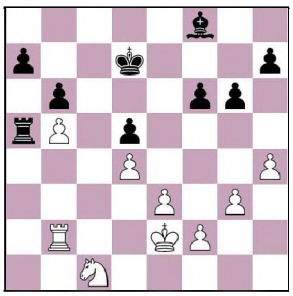
With two rounds to go, he was tied with Larsen, Miles and Romanishin in fifth position, a full 1½ points off the

desired third place. But in the last two rounds he crushed Larsen and Miles, with the latter game becoming an all-time quintessential Hedgehog, featuring the ...g7-g5-g4 pawn lever. He then came back from two points behind to draw the playoff match with Ribli, advancing thanks to better tiebreaks.

Earlier in the tournament, he outplayed Edmar Mednis from a slightly worse ending.

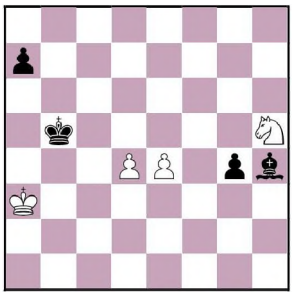
Edmar Mednis	2510
Andras Adorjan	2525

Interzonal, Riga 1979



33.♖a2? White has two pawn islands to Black's three but hits upon a dubious plan to trade rooks.

33...♗d6 34.♔d1 ♔e6 35.♖xa5 bxa5 36.♔c2 h5 37.♘e2 g5 38.f3 a4 39.e4 ♗b4 40.♘c3 dxe4 41.fxe4 a3 42.♘e2 ♗d6 43.♔b3 g4 44.♔a2 ♔e7 45.♔b3 ♔d7 46.♔a2 ♔c7 47.♘c3 ♗xg3 48.♘d5+ ♔b7 49.♘xf6 ♗xh4 50.♘xh5 ♔b6 51.♔xa3 ♔xb5



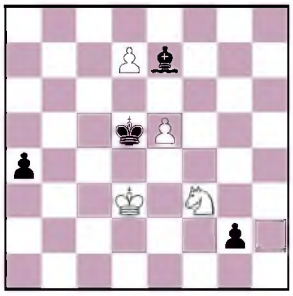
The long-range bishop and two distant passed pawns are much stronger than the knight and two connected passed pawns in the center.

52.♔b3 g3 53.♘f4 ♗g5 54.♘g2 a5 55.e5 ♗e7 56.d5 a4+ 57.♔a2 ♗c5! Black's bishop leaves the danger zone, leaving his king to guard against the advance of the white pawns – at least for the time being.

Alex Fishbein, an American grandmaster residing in Tennessee, emerged victorious in the inaugural Denker Tournament of High School Champions in 1985. Throughout the 1990s, he garnered multiple national and international wins, including in Denmark and Norway, achieving grandmaster status in 1992. Even while pursuing a finance career, Fishbein remained active in competition, participating in four U.S. Championships during the 2000s. Acclaimed for his endgame expertise, he secured the Best Endgame Prize in the 2004 U.S. Championship, penned a highly-regarded book on pawn endings in 1993, and contributed to the revision of Dvoretsky's *Endgame Manual* in 2020.

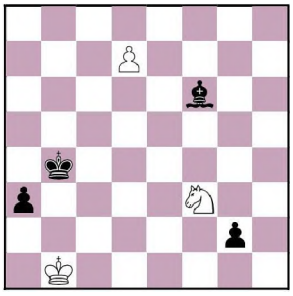
58.d6 ♔c6! 59.♘e1 ♔d7 60.♔b2 ♗b4 61.♘f3 61.♘g2 ♔e6 62.♔c2 ♔xe5 63.d7 ♗e7 64.♔d3 a3 65.♔c2 ♔e6−+.

61...g2 62.♔c2 ♔e6 63.♔d3 ♔d5! 64.d7 ♗e7



Now it is the turn of Black's bishop to keep watch over any possible advance of the white pawns, while his king invades.

65.♔c3 ♔e4 66.♘g1 ♔xe5 67.♘e2 ♔e4 68.♔c4 ♔e3 69.♘g1 ♔d2 70.♘f3+ ♔c1 71.♔c3 ♔b1 72.♘d2+ ♔a2 73.♘f3 ♗f6+ 74.♔c2 ♔a3 75.♘g1 ♔b4 76.♘f3 a3 77.♔b1

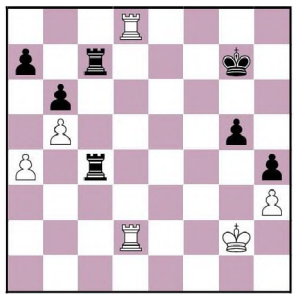


77...g1♕+ Having danced around the entire white camp, the king will deliver the decisive blow on the next move with 78...♔b3 followed by queening. **White resigned.**

The Candidates' Quarterfinal match Huebner – Adorjan was very close and decided by a tragedy in the endgame.

Robert Huebner	2600
Andras Adorjan	2550

Candidates Quarterfinals, Bad Lauterberg 1980

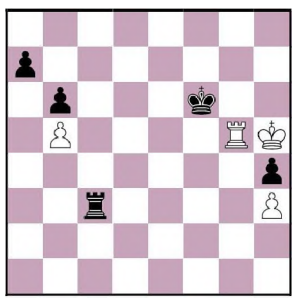


Adorjan was winning for most of this game, but the ending featured mutual mistakes. Here comes the next-to-last one.

59.♖2d5? 59.♖8d7+ ♔f6 60.a5! bxa5 61.♖xc7 ♖xc7 62.♖a2! would lead to a draw, for example: 62...♔e5 63.♖xa5 ♔d4 64.♔f3 ♔c5 65.♔g4 ♔b6 66.♖a1 ♔xb5 67.♔xg5 ♖h7 68.♔g6.

59...♖xa4! 60.♖xg5+ ♔f6 61.♖dg8 ♖a2+ 62.♔f3 ♖c3+ 63.♔g4 ♖g2+ 64.♔h5 64.♔xh4 ♖xg5 65.♖xg5 ♖xh3+, of course, is game over.

64...♖xg5+ 65.♖xg5 Here, 65...♖xh3 would have likely induced immediate resignation. But Andras thought he had found a faster win.



65...♖c5?? 66.♔xh4 ♖xg5 Stalemate!

Draw.

Winning this game would have tied the match, with just one game to go. As it happened, Huebner won 5½–4½ to advance to the semifinal and eventually the final, where he lost to Viktor Korchnoi.

Andras Adorjan valued his victory over Korchnoi in the Hedgehog highly. While the aformentioned game with Tony Miles was a middlegame attack with a queen sacrifice, the game we are about to see features an endgame structure that typically arises from this opening. Therefore, we would like to give this game in full.

A30

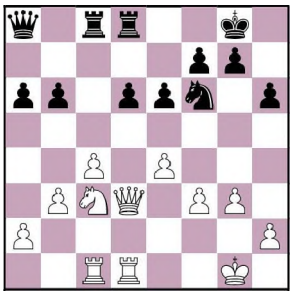
Viktor Korchnoi	2635
Andras Adorjan	2555

Cannes 1986

1.♘f3 c5 2.c4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 e6 4.g3 b6 5.♗g2 ♗b7 6.0-0 d6 7.d4 cxd4 8.♕xd4 a6 9.♖d1 ♗e7 10.♗g5 ♘bd7 11.♘d2 ♗xg2 12.♔xg2 0-0 13.♘de4 ♕c7 14.♖ac1 We have a typical Hedgehog structure where Black is occupying only three ranks, but is ready to spike with ...b6-b5, ...d6-d5, or something else. The hedgehog's quills are not easy to attack; here 14.♘xd6 ♖fd8 is uncomfortable for White.

14...♖fd8 15.♔g1 h6 16.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 17.♗xf6 ♘xf6 18.b3 ♖ac8 19.f3 ♕b8 20.♕d3 ♕a8 White has achieved nothing from the opening, and his next, slightly careless move, allows a typical pawn sacrifice.

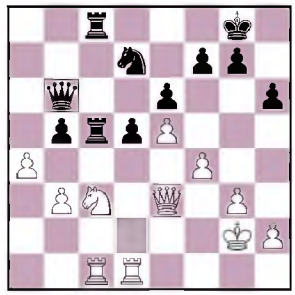
21.e4



21...b5! 22.cxb5 d5 23.e5 23.exd5 ♘xd5 24.♘xd5 ♖xd5 25.♖xc8+ ♕xc8 26.♕e2 ♖xb5 would reach an almost, but not quite equal, major piece ending. In fact, the Hedgehog graveyard for White is scattered with these positions, where the white pawns on the queenside are hobbled and often require defense, and his king position is not totally safe either. Black has the c-file, while White has no active plan. Sometimes Black might get two queenside pawns for one, leading to a '4 vs 3.' Understandably, Korchnoi avoids this structure. Or, perhaps, he is hoping to keep his extra pawn.

23...♘d7 24.♕e2 ♖c5 But now White starts running into real problems, with the pin on the c-file.

25.a4 ♖dc8 26.♕e3 ♕b8 27.f4 ♕b6 28.♔g2 axb5



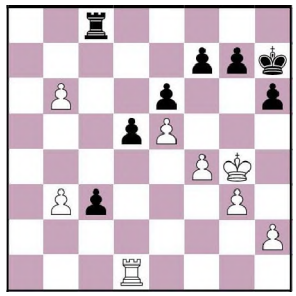
29.♔h3!? Avoiding another typical position in which White has an isolated pawn on b3, versus 5 on 4 on the kingside, and where Black has a protected passed pawn granting a clear (though not winning) advantage: 29.axb5 ♕a5 30.♘e2 ♕xb5 31.♖xc5 ♘xc5 32.♖c1 ♕b7 33.♕c3 ♖c7 34.♘d4 ♕b6.

29...♖5c6 30.♕xb6 ♘xb6 31.a5! 31.♘e2 ♖xc1 32.♖xc1 ♖xc1 33.♘xc1 bxa4 34.bxa4 ♘xa4 is another graveyard-type position that we talked about: probably not yet losing, but certainly no fun for White.

31...♖xc3 32.axb6?! After 32.♖xc3! ♖xc3 33.axb6 ♖c6 34.♖c1! ♖xb6 35.♔g4 Black's pieces are passive, and he can't do anything with his extra pawn.

32...b4! 33.♔g4 ♔h7! Removing his king from the back rank.

34.♖xc3 bxc3

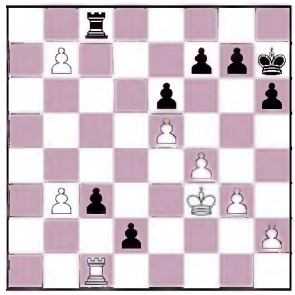


Evaluating all the ensuing endings here, both positionally and tactically, proved to be too difficult in time trouble. Viktor Lvovich's next move is the decisive error.

35.♖c1? The computer recommends 35.♔h5!?, which is an interesting defense. If Black plays ...g7-g6+, his king will have a harder time advancing.

35.b7 ♖b8 36.♖d3 ♖xb7 37.♖xc3 ♔g6 leads to another position of the type we discussed, not yet losing but still difficult.

35...d4 36.♔f3 d3! 37.b7 d2



White has miscalculated. Black is in time to queen, with his king on h7. The resulting queen ending is hopeless for White.

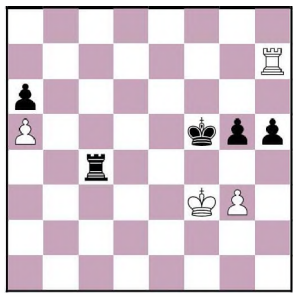
38.bxc8♕ dxc1♕ 39.♕c4 ♕d1+
White resigned

For this article, I only selected games where Andras faced strong opponents. Victor Ciocaltea might not be a familiar name to today's readers, but he defeated Bobby Fischer at the Olympiad in 1962. He was almost 20 years older than Adorjan but became a grandmaster much later, at the age of 46 in 1978.

The following game was played in 1973, the year Adorjan rose to GM status. But as we shall see, rook endings are difficult for everyone.

Victor Ciocaltea	
Andras Adorjan	

Budapest 1973



59.♖f7+ 59.♖xh5 ♖c3+ 60.♔g2 ♖a3

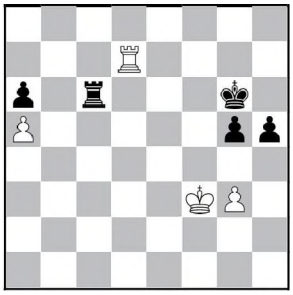
61.♖h6! ♖xa5 62.♔h3 ♖a1 63.g4+ ♔e5 64.♖c6! is a draw, but the game move doesn't spoil it yet.

59...♔g6 60.♖a7? But this loses. The key idea, missed by both players, is that the white rook needs to be able to check the black king on the 5th rank, not the 6th. White had to play 60.♖d7 or 60.♖e7.

60...♖c6? Returning the favor! Black wins with 60...♖c3+! 61.♔f2 ♖c2+ 62.♔f1 (Going forward doesn't help: *62.♔f3 g4+ 63.♔e3 ♖g2;* or *62.♔e3 ♔f5 63.♖xa6 ♔g4 64.♖g6 ♖g2*−+) and only now 62...♖c6! after which the black king has a free path forward: 63.♔g2 ♔f5! 64.♔h3 (*64.♖d7 ♖c5*) 64...♖c3! with the deadly threat of h5-h4.

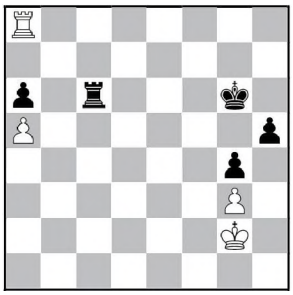
Now where do you think the rook should go? To a8, b7, or where else?

61.♖a8? Only 61.♖d7!! draws.



The white rook is in time to check the black king after 61...♖c3+ (*61...g4+ 62.♔f2 ♖c2+ 63.♔f1 ♔f5 64.♖d5+ ♔e4 65.♖xh5 ♔f3 66.♖f5+ ♔xg3 67.♖f6*=) 62.♔g2! ♔f5 63.♖d5+! ♔g4 64.♖d4+ ♔f5 65.♖d5+, etc.

61...♖f6+? It remains unfair to criticize the players, because the win is problem-like: 61...g4+! 62.♔g2

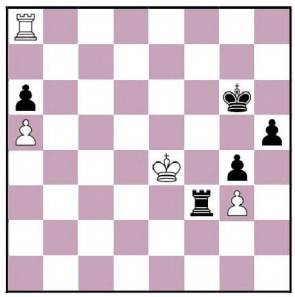


...when the only move is 62...♖d6!! (*62...♔f5 63.♖h8 ♖c2+ 64.♔g1 ♔e4* 65.♖xh5 gets you nowhere) 63.♖a7 and now here is why: 63...♔f5 64.♖h7 ♖d2+ 65.♔g1 ♔e4 66.♖xh5 ♖d5! and Black wins: 67.♖h6 ♖xa5 68.♖f6 ♔e3! 69.♖f4 ♖g5!.

62.♔e4? The final mistake. 62.♔g2! holds, e.g., 62...♔f5 (*62...g4 63.♖d8*=) 63.♔h3! ♔e4 64.♖h8=.

62...♖e6+! Now Black finds the right series of moves to win.

63.♔f3 g4+! 64.♔f4 ♖f6+! 65.♔e4 ♖f3! The rest is not as difficult.



66.♖xa6+ 66.♖g8+ ♔h7 67.♖a8 is a better try: 67...♖xg3 68.♖xa6 ♖f3 (*68...♖a3 69.♔f4* forces Black to backtrack with *69...♖f3*+) 69.♖b6 ♖a3! 70.♔f4 ♖xa5 71.♖c6 ♖a1 72.♖c5 ♔g6 73.♖c6+ ♔f7 74.♖c5 ♖f1+ 75.♔g5 g3−+.

66...♔g5 67.♖d6 ♖xg3 68.♖d3 ♖g1 69.♖a3 h4 70.a6 h3 71.♖a2 g3 71...♖e1+ 72.♔d3 ♖e8 also wins.

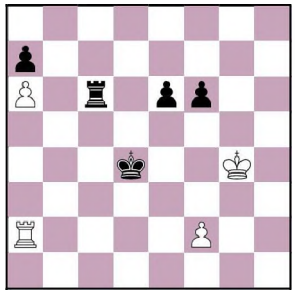
72.a7 h2 **White resigned.**

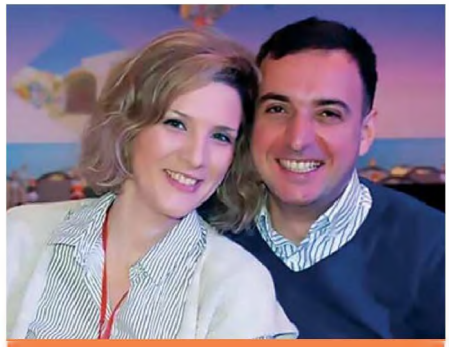
These endings are so complicated that I am not sure that players who played them and made these mistakes would have understood after the game what had happened. Experience shows that most analysis conducted before computers had serious flaws.

Five years later, Andras had another opportunity to play a rook ending a pawn up, with blocked a-pawns and two against one on the other side.

Vlastimil Jansa	2505
Andras Adorjan	2515

Budapest 1978





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Marija & Merab

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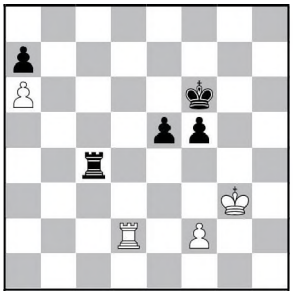
academy@chessgagunashvili.com

Viber or WhatsApp
+995 599 40 81 75

Facing the Czech grandmaster (and future World Senior Champion!) Vlastimil Jansa, Adorjan chooses the most human plan: walk over to the queenside and capture the a6 pawn, while the rook safely defends the kingside pawns. Black will then be two pawns up. What can be simpler?

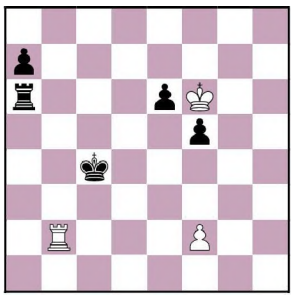
55...♔c5? The right way to win was to improve the position of the king and rook, and gradually advance the kingside pawns, taking advantage of the bad position of the white rook. The black king needs to stay near its pawns.

A sample line is 55...♔e5 56.♖a5+ ♔d6 57.♖a2 ♖c4+ 58.♔g3 e5! 59.♖a3 ♔e6 60.♖a2 ♖c3+ 61.♔g4 f5+ 62.♔h4 ♔f6 63.♖d2 ♖c4+ 64.♔g3



64...♖a4 65.♖d6+ ♔g5 66.♔g2 e4−+.

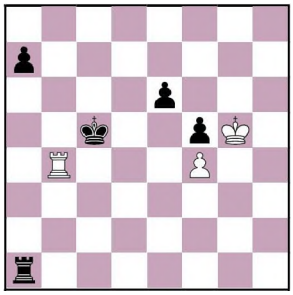
56.♔h5! ♔b5 57.♔g6 f5 58.♔f6 ♖xa6 59.♖b2+ ♔c4



60.♖b7? Jansa misses his chance.

After 60.f4! ♖c6 61.♖a2 a6 62.♖a1!, in order to have enough distance for frontal checks, for example after 62...♔b4 63.♖b1+ ♔a3 64.♖a1+ ♔b2 65.♖a5 I don't see a win for Black. The white king keeps attaching itself to the e6 pawn and going back to g5 when necessary. Maybe readers can find a win?

60...♔d5 61.♖b5+ 61.f4 doesn't help here: 61...♔e4 62.♔g5 ♖a1 63.♖b4+ ♔e3 64.♖b3+ ♔d4 65.♖b4+ ♔c5



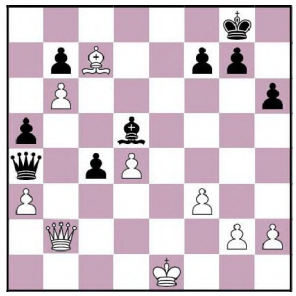
66.♖b2 a5−+.

61...♔e4! 62.♖b4+ ♔f3 63.♖b2 ♖b6 64.♖a2 a5! 65.♖xa5 ♔xf2 66.♔g5 ♖b3 67.♖a4 ♔g3 White resigned

After these counterintuitive rook endings, let's tackle something simpler (maybe!): opposite-color bishop endings.

Zoltan Varga	2475
Andras Adorjan	2545

Hungarian Championship 1993

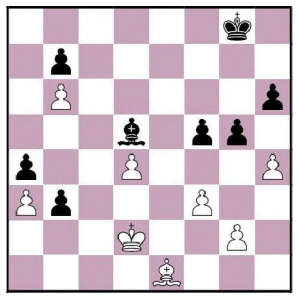


Black has a clear advantage in view of his more active bishop, more dangerous passed pawn, and maybe even his chances to attack the opponent's king. Should he trade into a pure opposite-colored bishop ending, or keep the queens on? Being able to properly evaluate opposite-color-bishop endings is a sign of a good player.

31...♕b3! 32.♕xb3 White has little choice as 32.♕c1 c3 is miserable.

32...cxb3 33.♔d2 g5? 34.♗g3? This type of mutual mistake happens at all levels, all the way up to world championship. Black needed to close up with ...a5-a4 on the previous move, because here White could have drawn with 34.a4! f5 35.♗g3 (looking to eliminate the a5 pawn) 35...♗c6 36.♔c3 ♗xa4 37.d5 ♔f7 38.♗e5 f4 39.g3=.

34...a4! 35.♗e1 f5 36.h4



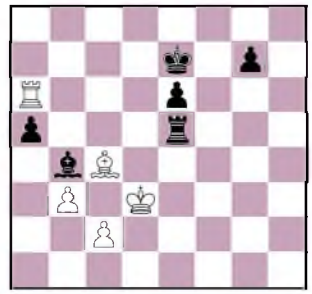
36...f4! Fixing the white pawns on the color of the black bishop.

37.hxg5 hxg5 38.♔c1 ♔f7 39.♗c3 ♔e6 40.♔d2 ♔f5 White resigned, as his territory is far too wide to defend. If the king stays near the kingside pawns, the black king comes around to b2.

As you have noticed, I have selected only games where Andras had Black, in deference to the "Black is OK" theme. Actually, my best endgames tend to be with Black. With White I am more likely to develop some combinational attack, whereas winning with Black usually requires a prolonged effort.

Anthony Kosten	2510
Andras Adorjan	2520

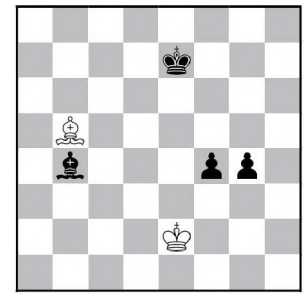
Esbjerg 1988



Here, Adorjan has been trying to make something of his extra pawn in the OCB ending with rooks. The computer says "-0.04," but the young soon-to-be grandmaster handling the white pieces, understandably, is looking for a quick resolution.

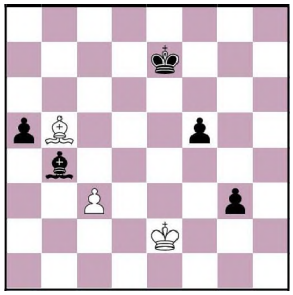
48.♖b6 g5 49.♖b5 ♖f5! 50.♖xf5? White is looking forward to a draw two pawns down, as the two black pawns cannot break through against the king and bishop – but he has missed a major detail.

50...exf5 51.c3 ♗d6 52.♗b5 g4 53.b4 g3 53...axb4? would be a mistake, for example: 54.cxb4 ♗xb4 55.♔e2 f4 (Or *55...♔f6 56.♔f2 ♔e5 57.♔g2 ♔f4 58.♗d7 ♔g5 59.♗a4*)



56.♔f2 (*56.♗c6? ♗c5!*−+) 56...♔f6 57.♗e2 ♗c5+ 58.♔g2 ♔g5 59.♗d1 with a standard draw.

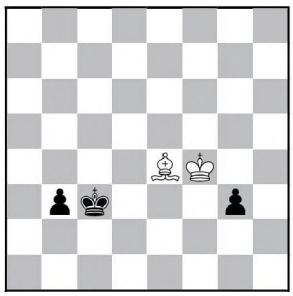
54.♔e2 ♗xb4!



But three advanced pawns on opposite sides of the board win against a bishop! This technique is reminiscent of an Alex Yermolinsky game I featured in the article on the 2021 U.S. Senior Closed (ACM #23, pp.84 -*Ed.*). Black exchanges not the pawn, but the bishop. Every Russian schoolboy knows the games of Andras Adorjan!

55.cxb4 axb4 56.♗c4 ♔d6 57.♔f3 f4 58.♗b3 ♔e5 59.♗d1 ♔d4 60.♗c2 ♔c3 61.♗e4 But how does Black win here? Isn't the b-pawn too far from the end zone? It seems like the white king can just remove the other two black pawns while the bishop covers b1.

61...b3 62.♔xf4



62...♔d4!! This final scorpion's sting is a fitting way to end our survey of Adorjan's endgames. The bishop cannot stop both pawn on its own, and the king is now of no help after **63.♔f3 g2!**. Therefore, **White resigned**.

Grandmaster Adorjan added a lot to the modern chess culture and will be missed. Rest in peace, Andras.

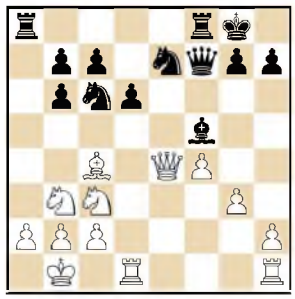
SMALL CHESS LECTURES

By GM Nikola Nestorovic

Solve The Threats

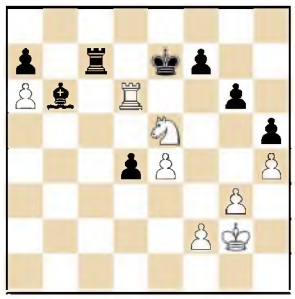
Solutions on page 94

1. Karin Nemcova 1888
Govhar Beydullayeva 2202
U16 Girls World Championship, Porto Carras 2018



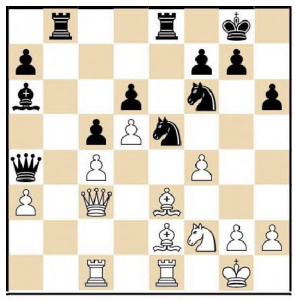
Black to move

2. Idani Pouya 2568
Mahdi Gholami Orimi 2226
Rasht Khazar Open 2016



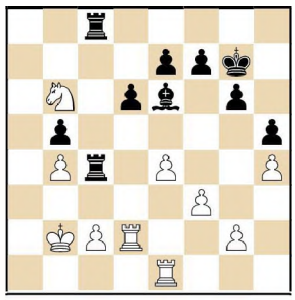
White to move

3. Milan Pacher 2399
Sergei Zhigalko 2671
Cappelle la Grande Open 2011



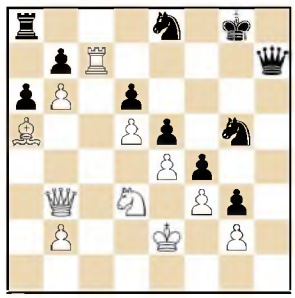
Black to move

4. Viswanathan Anand 2725
Garry Kasparov 2795
Game 11, World Championship Match, New York 1995



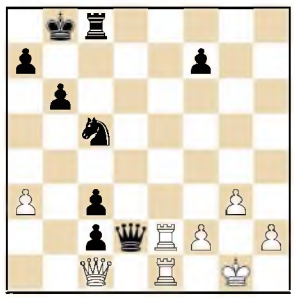
Black to move

5. Mathias Roeder 2420
Mark Hebden 2500
Bern Open 1992



Black to move

6. Martin Pecinka 2083
Daniel Kozusek 2085
Czech Team Championship 2013



Black to move

A RARE COLLECTION OF UNKNOWN AMERICAN CHESS GAMES

Oklahoma's First Rated Master

FROM A RATHER UNIQUE GAMES DATABASE, *AMERICAN CHESS MAGAZINE* REVEALS EXCLUSIVELY SOME HIDDEN GEMS GATHERED TOGETHER OVER DECADES BY RENOWNED BIBLIOPHILE ANDY ANSEL.

Ballard's best known game is his 1964 simul win against Bobby Fischer, when he outprepared the future champion in an Accelerated Dragon using analysis from the Russian chess magazine. However, most of D's other games remain unknown.

By Andy Ansel

In this article we will look at some games played by D LaPierre Ballard (1944-2022). D LaPierre Ballard was the strongest Oklahoma player in the years before the Fischer boom. Funnily enough, Ballard was under the strong influence of Russian chess literature at that time. He even wrote his score sheets using Russian algebraic notation. D (and that is his actual first name, not short for anything) was Oklahoma's first rated Master. Ballard's chess career started in 1962 while in college, and basically ended at Tulsa in 1974 when he withdrew after winning his first two games to achieve a published Master rating. He did come out of retirement and play two games in 2010.

Ballard's best known game is his win against Bobby Fischer during Fischer's 1964 simul tour, when he outprepared Bobby in an Accelerated Dragon using analysis from *Shakhmatny Bulletin*. However, most of D's other games remain unknown. *Mega* only has two other games of his, while *Chessgames.com* has an impressive 14 games spanning his entire career.

I obtained a Xerox copy of his game scores from 1962 through 1967 which include many games against the Southwest's top players. D LaPierre's playing style was on the aggressive side. He played the King's Indian and Accelerated Dragon as Black. As White he opened with 1.e4. Interestingly, he kept score using Russian algebraic notation, which was quite unusual for an American in the 1960s.

On to the games which show how even unknown players can play some great games. Annotations are provided by Pete Tamburro.

In the first game, Ballard's opponent is Ken Smith. Smith, a chess legend from Texas, was also a poker champion and owned the largest U.S. chess retailer Chess Digest. In my files I have Ballard playing Smith five times with an even score.

Andy Ansel can be considered a product of the Fischer boom, having learned to play chess in 1972. He was active in the Bay Area chess scene while in High School, after which he moved to New York, where he achieved a peak rating of around 2100. He has now retired from active chess play but spends his time collecting books and maintaining a database based on games drawn from his library. He currently resides in North Fork, Long Island, with his wife and two dogs. His grown-up daughters live in NYC and London.

B35

Ken Smith

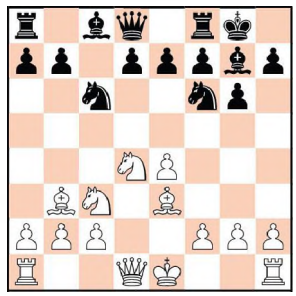
D Ballard

Arkansas Open, Hot Springs 1966

This game is a bit of an anomaly as Ken Smith does not play the Smith-Morra Gambit. One of my all-time favorite quotes is from Larsen in the 1972 tournament book when Smith's opponent played 1...e6: "Stronger is 1...c5, which wins a pawn."

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 g6 The Accelerated Dragon: very popular as several methods have been developed to deal with the once "dreaded Maroczy Bind."

5.♘c3 ♗g7 6.♗e3 ♘f6 7.♗c4 0-0 8.♗b3 The main alternative is exemplified by the game Fischer-Panno, Interzonal, Portoroz 1958, 8.f3 ♕b6 9.♗b3 ♘xe4 10.♘d5 ♕a5+ 11.c3 ♘c5 12.♘xc6 dxc6 13.♘xe7+ ♔h8 14.♘xc8 ♖axc8. A more detailed discussion can be found in *Openings for Amateurs – Next Steps*.



8...♘g4!? There are three playable alternatives: 8...a5, 8...b6 and 8...d5. Having said that, the game move falls under the aegis of "just because you can play a move doesn't mean you should."

9.♕xg4 ♘xd4 10.♕d1 ♘xb3 11.axb3 Ballard has his two bishops and does his level best to hold on to them.

11...b6 12.♗d4! Very logical. Get rid of the dark-squared bishop.

12...f6 Very ideological. He must really have liked his bishops. (See the box on next page -*Ed.*)

13.0-0!? Surprising for a player of Smith's aggressive nature. 13.♕d3 ♗b7 14.0-0-0 ♕c7 15.h4 seemed called for.

A Surprise For Bobby

Robert Fischer
D Ballard

Wichita Simul 1964

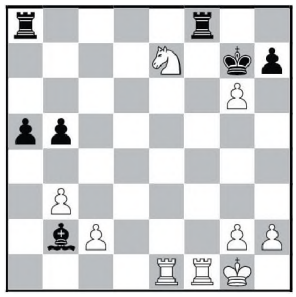
13.h4 ♗b7 14.h5 ♔f7 15.♕g4 d5 16.exd5 ♗xd5 17.0-0-0 ♗e6 18.♕g3 ♕b8 19.♕f3 ♕c8

20.♘e4? ♗g4 21.hxg6+ hxg6 22.♕d3 ♗xd1 23.♖xd1 ♕c6 24.♖h1 ♖ac8 25.c3 ♖h8 26.♖e1 ♖hd8 27.f4 ♕d5 28.♔b1 ♕xb3 29.f5 gxf5 30.♘g5+ fxg5 31.♕xf5+ ♗f6 32.♗xf6 ♖d1+ 33.♖xd1 ♕xd1+ 34.♔a2 ♖c5 35.♗e5+ ♔e8 36.b4 ♕e2+

White resigned

13...♗b7 14.f4 This thrust, however, is easily countered by the text move or by ...e7-e6.

14...d5 15.e5 It gets complicated and exciting with the obvious 15.exd5 ♗xd5 16.♗xf6 ♗xf6 17.♕xd5+ ♕xd5 18.♘xd5 ♗xb2 19.♘xe7+ ♔f7 20.♖ae1 a5 21.f5 b5 22.fxg6+ ♔g7

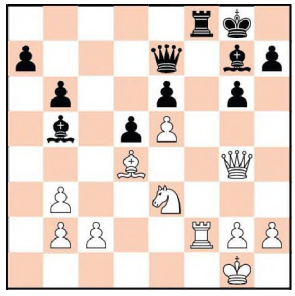


A) White can't go two pawns up because of 23.gxh7 ♖xf1+ 24.♖xf1 (*24.♔xf1 a4*) 24...a4;

B) 23.♘f5+ ♔xg6 24.♖e6+ ♖f6 25.♘e7+ ♔g7 26.♖fxf6 ♗xf6 27.♘d5 ♗d4+ I would love to have been a fly on the wall at this post-mortem.

15...fxe5 16.fxe5 ♖xf1+ 17.♕xf1 ♕c7 18.♕e2 ♗c6 Things have settled down a bit after the flurry of excitement. White has in mind a b4/b5 sequence to pin down the a7 pawn. Black might want to discourage that with 18...♕c8 19.b4 ♕c4 and yet keep his options open along the c8-h3 diagonal.

19.♖f1 e6 20.♘d1 ♕e7 21.♕g4 ♗b5 22.♖f2 ♖f8 23.♘e3



23...♖xf2! Sure. Once the rooks are exchanged, the draw is pretty much assured.

24.♔xf2 ♕f7+ 25.♕f3 "Let's go to dinner."

25...♕xf3+ 26.♔xf3 h5 27.g4 ♗h6 "Who's buying?" **Draw.**

The second game is against Houston's Robert Brieger, a noted problemist and author of several endgame books. He was a Master player and a fixture on the Southwest chess tour. His playing style was very original. He even wrote a little pamphlet on the 2...♗f5 line in the Queen's Gambit Declined. His endgame studies often featured reciprocal *zugzwang* and minor piece promotion.

B22

Robert Brieger
D Ballard

Texas Open, Denton 1966

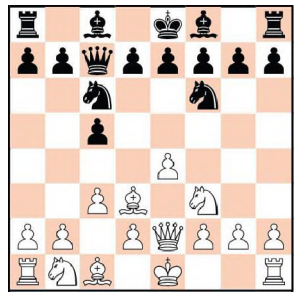
Robert Brieger's approach in this game is what one might expect from an endgame composer with a fertile and experimental mind. His search for originality apparently was not limited to that part of our noble game.

1.e4 c5 2.c3 ♘f6 If you're playing for a win as Black, this is the best move against the Alapin Sicilian.

3.♗d3!? You would be amazed at who has tried this ♗d3 before d4 move with c3 to follow. Go to Chessbase and search through the startling number of well-known players who have used this idea against ...e6, ...♘c6 and ...d6 Sicilians as well. Years ago IM Danny Kopec (1954-2016) used this idea against the ...d6 Sicilian: 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.♗d3 ♘c6 4.c3.

3...♘c6 4.♘f3 ♕c7 Both 4...e5 and 4...d5 are very good here as well.

5.♕e2

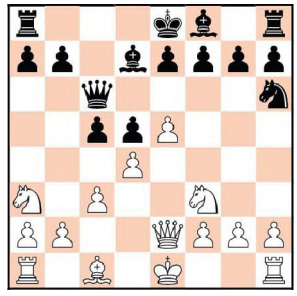


5...d5! 6.e5 ♘g4 6...♘h5 with the threat of ...♘f4 doesn't appeal to him.

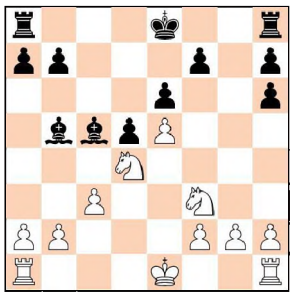
7.♗b5 Adjusting to circumstances – the threat to the pawn.

7...♗d7 8.♗xc6 ♕xc6 9.♘a3 So the bishop will be protected after d4.

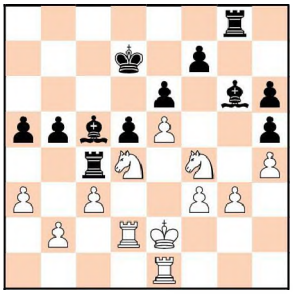
9...♘h6 10.d4



10...e6? Because the queen would still be protecting the knight on h6, better would be 10...c4.
11.♗xh6 gxh6 Again with the two bishops. He doesn't mind the doubled pawns and is ready to use the g-file to attack if White castles kingside.
12.dxc5 It would have been fun to see each one get what they want after 12.0-0 0-0-0 13.♘c2 ♖g8.
12...♗xc5 13.♘c2 ♕b5 14.♕xb5 ♗xb5 15.♘cd4 Two bishops vs. two knights. Not so easy because of the currently blocked position.

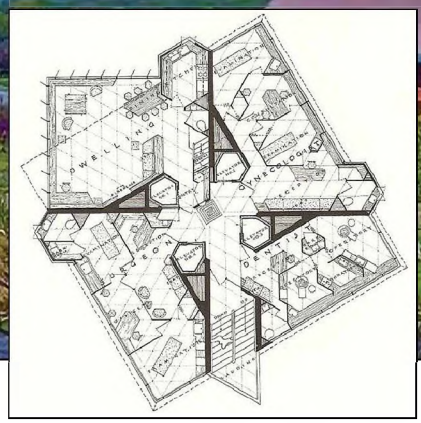


15...♗d3! A better diagonal. There is no need to prevent castling because White won't be contemplating that anyhow.
16.♔d2 ♗e4 17.♘e1 ♔d7 18.f3 ♗g6 19.♘d3 ♗e7 The knights, however, are centralized and holding their own.
20.h4 h5 21.♘f4 White is not threatening to take the bishop. He's threatening to go for the h5 pawn with ♘e2 and ♘g3. Ballard takes a good look and prepares a counterattack should that be tried.
21...♖hg8 22.♔e3 h6 23.♔f2 a6 24.g3 Brieger realizes that there will be sufficient counterplay for Black after 24.♘de2 b5 25.♘g3 ♗c5+ 26.♔f1 b4 27.♘gxh5 ♗xh5 28.♘xh5 ♖gb8 29.♘f6+ ♔e7 30.♔e2 bxc3 31.bxc3 ♖b2+.
24...♖ac8 25.♖he1 ♖c4 One nice thing about Ballard's previous plan is that it becomes a viable strategy here with the ...b5-b4 idea.
26.♖ad1 b5 27.a3 ♗c5 28.♖d2 a5 Ballard's minority attack is in full swing.
29.♔e2

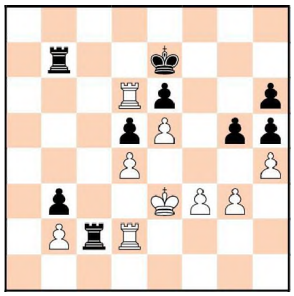


AN ICONIC LANDMARK AND CULTURAL GEM OF OKLAHOMA

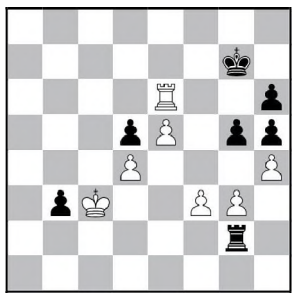
PRICE TOWER IN BARTLESVILLE, OKLAHOMA IS CELEBRATED FOR ITS DISTINCTIVE ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN BY FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT. AS WRIGHT'S ONLY REALIZED SKYSCRAPER, IT STANDS AS A TESTAMENT TO HIS UNIQUE VISION AND CREATIVITY. WITH ITS BLEND OF ORGANIC AND GEOMETRIC ELEMENTS, THE TOWER HAS BECOME AN ICONIC SYMBOL OF ARCHITECTURAL INNOVATION.



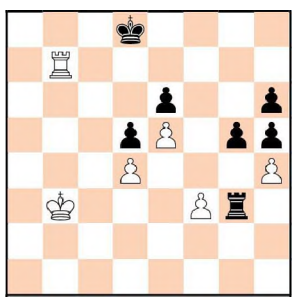
29...♗a7?? He should have continued with the plan 29...b4! 30.axb4 axb4 31.♖c1 ♖b8. Instead, he makes a fatal blunder.
30.♘g2?? And Brieger misses it! 30.♘xb5 ♗b8 31.♔f2 a4 32.♖d4±.
30...♖b8 The minority attack still works: 30...b4.
31.♖a1 ♖b7 32.♘f4 b4 How many times have we seen in our own games a move we played one or two moves after we should have?
33.axb4 axb4 34.♘xg6 fxg6 35.♖a6 ♗xd4 36.cxd4 b3 After 36...♔e7 there's not much for either side to do. However, Ballard goes for an edgy move.
37.♔f2 ♖c2 38.♔e3 ♖bc7 39.♖d3 ♖b7 39...♖xb2 40.♖b6=.
40.♖d6+ ♔e7 41.♖d2 g5



42.♖a6 ♖xd2 43.♔xd2 ♖c7 44.♖b6 ♖c2+ 45.♔d3 ♖xb2 46.♖b7+ ♔f8 47.♖b8+ ♔g7 48.♖b7+ ♔f8 Lots of tense play leading to equality: 48...♔g6 49.♖e7 ♖g2 50.♖xe6+ ♔g7 51.♔c3



A) 51...♖xg3 52.♔xb3 g4.
B) 51...b2 52.♖b6 ♖xg3 53.♖xb2 ♖xf3+ 54.♔b4 ♖f4 55.♔c5 ♖xh4 56.♔xd5 g4 57.e6 g3 58.♔e5 ♖h2 59.♖b1 h4=
49.♖b8+ ♔e7 50.♖b7+ ♔d8 51.♔c3 ♖g2 52.♔xb3 ♖xg3



53.♔b4 The difficult position of the black king and the white king's access to d6 is a key in all this. 53.hxg5 hxg5 (53...*♖xf3+ 54.♔b4 hxg5 55.♔c5*) 54.♔b4 h4 55.♔c5

h3 56.♔d6 ♔c8 57.♖c7+ ♔b8 58.♖f7.
53...♖xf3 54.♖h7 gxh4 55.♖xh6 ♔e7 56.♖xh5 h3 57.♖h7+ ♔f8 58.♔c5 ♖a3 59.♔d6 ♖a6+ 60.♔c5 ♖a3 This is drawn. Brieger must have stepped over the time limit and **Black won**.

A tough fight. By the way, this was by no means an easy tournament. Roy Hoppe of California won with 6 wins and a draw. Ballard and Ken Smith finished on a shared 2nd a point behind, while a half point behind them were Jude Acers, Eric Bone and Robert Brieger.

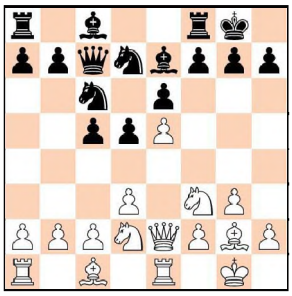
Despite extensive research, I could not find out anything about his last opponent Robert McCready. There are no games of his in any commercial database, but I did find an Expert rating published in *Chess Life*...

C00

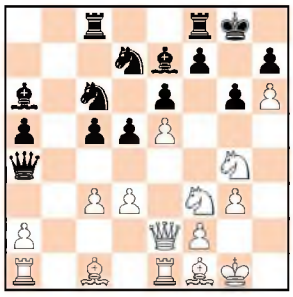
D Ballard
Robert McCready

Oklahoma Chess Festival, Norman 1965

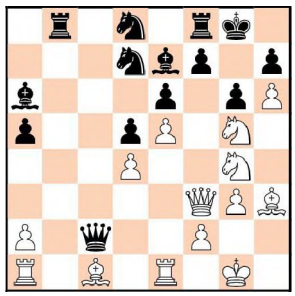
1.e4 e6 2.d3 d5 3.♘d2 c5 4.♘gf3 ♘c6 5.g3 The King's Indian Attack is a very good system to familiarize yourself with. It has many features and subtleties that lead to complex positions where you will be playing your opponent instead of some GM-generated line from a specialty opening book. In recommending the ♕xd4 Sicilian to my students, I also recommend the KIA should Black not cooperate with 2...d6 and play 2...e6. One of the nice features is that you have a move in hand while playing the King's Indian AND how many players of the White pieces play an inchworm move like e3 against it?
5...♘f6 6.♗g2 ♗e7 7.0-0 0-0 8.♖e1 This line is still played today. The initial skirmish will be in the center of the battlefield as White takes over the hill on e5 and Black has to make a choice on how to contest an enemy incursion into his dark squares.
8...♕c7 9.e5 ♘d7 10.♕e2



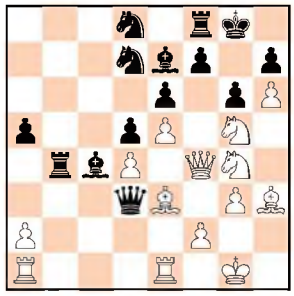
10...b5 In the spirit of the Sicilian, Black initiates a counter demonstration on the queenside. What's fascinating is that all sorts of GMs have been in this exact position. Onischuk has been on both sides! Benko, Bronstein and Korchnoi in the distant past played the White side while Nepo, Sevian, Svidler and Firouzja have chosen it in recent years. The Black side has been played by Dominguez Perez and Kramnik. Whichever side you pick, you're in good company.
11.♘f1 Starting a knight path from f1 to h2 maybe even g3-g4 and further in some future kingside attack.
11...a5 12.h4 Back in the day, I remember seeing this move for the first time. Are you allowed to do that?? Yes you are! The center is for the moment stable. The wing attacks begin and room is made for the knight. Not to be outdone, the Texas expert chooses a move that gets an "!" from *Chessbase*. These guys didn't even have *Informant* yet – unless they had *Informator "Zero"*, which I have on my shelves.
12...♗a6! The indirect attack on the queen means White will have to worry about more than the kingside attack.
13.h5 ♖ac8 Perhaps not familiar with Tarrasch's dictum that when a rook pawn gets to your fourth rank against your castled position, you need to nudge the rook pawn forward: 13...h6.
14.c3 Thus, following Tarrasch, White should have pushed the pawn, i.e. 14.h6 g6 15.♗f4 ♘d4 16.♘xd4 cxd4 17.♖ac1 b4 18.♘h2 a4 19.♗xd5!±.
14...b4? Last chance for ...h7-h6.
15.h6 g6 16.♘1h2 That gaping hole on f6 may very well have a white knight land on it someday...
16...♖b6 17.♘g4 ♕b5 Black had at least to try 17...a4.
18.♗f1 bxc3 19.bxc3 ♕a4



20.♗h3! The Black forces usually in charge of defense of e6 are now flailing around the queenside. That bishop is now dangerous for potential sacrificial reasons.
20...♖b8 21.♘g5? Much better was trying to get rid of a key dark-square defender. You have to get all your players off the bench and into the game. We often forget that it helps to complete development before move 22. Therefore 21.♗g5!.
21...♘d8? Black had one more chance to make it a real fight: 21...d4! 22.♕e4 c4 23.♗g2 ♗b7 24.♕f4 cxd3 25.♗d2 and we now have hand-to-hand combat.
22.♕f3? There are times when you have to take a pause in your attack and shore up the home front. That's what was needed here: 22.♘f3! ♕b5 23.♖d1 ♘c6 24.c4 dxc4 25.dxc4 ♕b7 26.♕e4±.
22...♕c2! Still in there fighting!
23.d4 Objectively better was 23.♘f6+ ♗xf6 24.exf6 ♕xc3 25.♗f4 ♖b7 26.♗d6 ♕xd3 27.♖e3 ♕d2.
23...cxd4 24.cxd4



24...♕d3?? It's still a fight after 24...♘c6 25.♕e3 (Not *25.♗e3 ♘xd4 26.♗xd4 ♗xg5*) 25...♕a4 26.♘f3 ♘b4.
25.♕f4! No queen exchange, thank you.
25...♖b4 Now, with the queen protecting the knight on g5, 25...♘c6 doesn't work because of 26.♗e3.
26.♗e3 ♗c4 And now the final assault. Ballard is in his element.



27.♘f6+! ♗xf6 28.exf6 ♖b2 29.♕d6 Everything works.
29...♘xf6 30.♕e7 A queen forking knights for a change.
30...♘h5 31.♘xh7! Black resigned due to major material loss ahead.

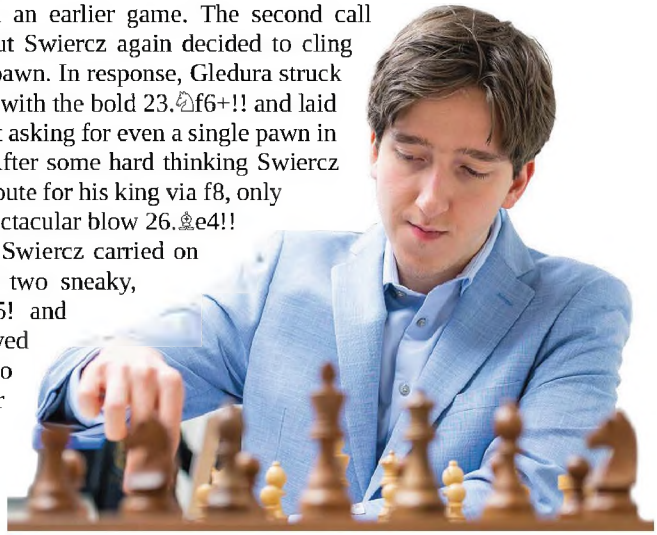
The King's Indian Attack is not for the faint hearted. In going through these three games, Ballard shines through as a dynamic player perfect for Swiss System tournaments. He loves his bishops and handles the rest of his team very well.

By GM Sarunas Sulskis

3

HOW GLEDURA BOLDLY CHARGED SWIERCZ'S KING

I round off my Spring Chess Classic selection with an American on the losing side – unfortunately! Following a sharp early fianchetto in the English Opening, the players plunged into a dynamic middlegame. Known for his solidity, Swiercz was reluctant to give up a pawn as Caruana had done in an earlier game. The second call came six moves later, but Swiercz again decided to cling stubbornly to his center pawn. In response, Gledura struck his opponent's king hard with the bold 23.♘f6+!! and laid a long-term siege without asking for even a single pawn in return for his audacity. After some hard thinking Swiercz devised a clever escape route for his king via f8, only to be dealt the further spectacular blow 26.♗e4!! by Gledura. Astonished, Swiercz carried on resisting the attack, but two sneaky, tiger-like moves 28.♖h5! and 30.♖h6! by White proved too heavy a task to handle even for the ever tenacious American.



Benjamin Gledura. Spring Chess Classic, St.Louis 2023 *Photo by Crystal Fuller*

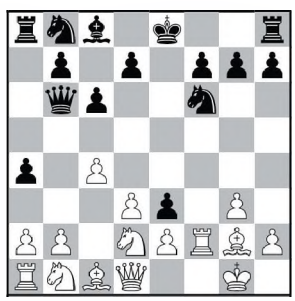
A20

Benjamin Gledura	2637
Dariusz Swiercz	2646

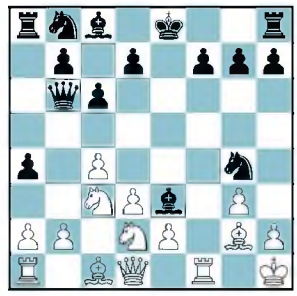
Spring Chess Classic - A, St.Louis 2023

1.c4 e5 2.g3 This early fianchetto is currently at the height of fashion in the English Opening market.
2...♘f6 3.♗g2 c6 4.♘f3 Cutting-edge strategy. Before Black is able to conveniently grab the center with ...d7-d5, White provokes another pawn advance towards his own territory, only to undermine it later. 4.d4 exd4 5.♕xd4 d5 for decades used to be the main line.
4...e4 5.♘d4 ♕b6 6.♘b3 a5

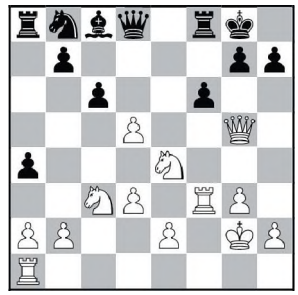
7.d3 True to his strategy, White now attempts to undermine Black's presence in the center.
7...a4 8.♘3d2 ♗c5 9.0-0 e3 Both players must still have been in their preparation as the line has seen a significant input by U.S. players. I am mildly surprised that so far nobody has essayed the strike 9...♗xf2+, when, in my humble view, White needs only three moves to avoid a lost position out of the opening. 10.♖xf2 e3



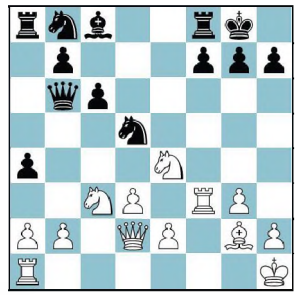
11.♖xf6! exd2+ (*11...gxf6? 12.♘e4!+–*) 12.♖f2□ dxc1♗ 13.♕xc1 and White is slightly better.
10.fxe3 ♗xe3+ 11.♔h1 ♘g4 12.♘c3



12...0-0 There were two ways to greedily grab the exchange, each of which is punishable: 12...♘f2+ 13.♖xf2 ♗xf2 14.♘de4 ♗c5 15.♘xa4± and 12...♗xd2 13.♗xd2 ♘f2+ 14.♖xf2 ♕xf2 15.♘e4→.
13.♘de4 d5 14.cxd5 ♗xc1 15.♕xc1 ♘e3 16.♖f3 ♘xd5 Swiercz seems reluctant to play on a pawn down. However, this was actually the case in a trailblazing game between Wesley So and Fabiano Caruana, played in 2019 in the very same premises of the Saint Louis Chess Club. That sharp battle continued 16...♘xg2 17.♔xg2 ♕d8 18.♕g5 f6



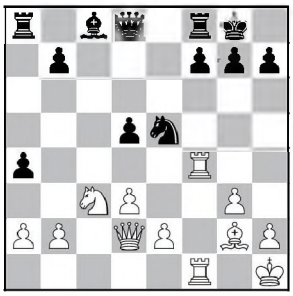
19.♘xf6+ ♖xf6 20.♘e4 ♘d7 21.♖af1 ♔h8 22.♘xf6 ♘xf6 23.e4 ♗d7 and was later drawn by perpetual check on move 36. W.So 2776 - F.Caruana 2818, Saint Louis 2019.
17.♕d2



17...♕d8 Two years later, Wesley So again left his mark on the line, this time as Black in a blitz game against Peter Svidler. There he chose 17...♘d7 and a draw was agreed on move 42 in P.Svidler 2714 - W.So 2770, Paris 2021.
18.♖af1 Now the game looks more pleasant for White.

18...♘d7 19.♘xd5 cxd5 20.♘c3 d4?! Hardly the best as it allows in the white knight. However, there are no easy solutions for Swiercz.

An alternative was 20...♘e5, met by 21.♖f4



A) When he obviously rejected 21...♗e6 as it loses the a4 pawn. However, White loses time and central control while he picks it up, e.g. 22.♖xa4 (*22.♘xa4 g5! 23.♖f6 ♖xa4 24.♕xg5+ ♘g6*) 22...d4 23.♖xa8 ♕xa8 24.♘b5 ♕a4⇆.

B) 21...d4 22.♘d5 transposes into the game.

21.♘d5! ♘e5 On 21...♘b6 22.♘f6+ is possible, when 22...gxf6 23.♖xf6 ♗e6 24.♕h6 allows White a strong attack.

However, in case of the humble 22...♔h8, I am less sure about the strength of White's attack. For example, 23.♖f4 gxf6 24.♖h4 ♖g8 25.♕h6 ♖g7 26.♖xf6 ♗e6 27.♗e4 ♕g8 28.♕h5 ♘d7 and Black holds.

22.♖f4 ♘c6? In search of an easy solution, Swiercz underestimates his opponent's resolve and by stubbornly clinging to the d4 pawn commits the principal mistake of the game. 22...♕g5? would have failed even quicker but no less spectacularly after 23.♖xf7!! ♘xf7 24.♕xg5 ♘xg5 25.♘e7+.

22...♗e6, leaving the d4 pawn to its fate, was a hard solution to come by.

A) 23.♘f6+? would be an unlikely response, because of 23...gxf6 24.♖h4 ♘g4 25.♕f4 (*25.♗e4 ♘e3 26.♗xh7+ ♔g7∓*) 25...f5;

B) 23.♖xd4 ♔h8! creates the nasty threat of ...♘c6. Then after 24.e4 b5, with the white rook stuck on d4 there is still a lot of play ahead.

BROADEN YOUR HORIZONS!

THE BLOG OF
GRANDMASTER ALEX COLOVIC

Ranked among the "Best Chess Blogs on the Planet" since 2016. Grandmaster Alex Colovic, President of Association of Chess Professionals (ACP) from 2019-2023, writes in style about all aspects of chess. From openings to endgames, psychology and practical advice, he provides deep insight into the secrets of our beloved game. Visit, read and broaden your horizons

www.alexcolovic.com

Alex writes on Substack, subscribe at substack.com/@gmalexcolovic.
He also shares his views on current news in video format at www.youtube.com/@gmalexcolovic.

GM Colovic is the author of *The Sinquefield Chess Generation*, a book that analyzes and explores in great depth the styles and preferences of America's top young talent.

23.♘f6+!! A spectacular knight sac, exposing the enemy king to a strong attack.

23...gxf6 This time Black doesn't have any other choice than to accept the 'gift'. If 23...♔h8 then 24.♖h4 wins on the spot.

24.♖h4! Gledura has no need to take the f6 pawn. In fact it obstructs Black's defensive resource of ...f7-f5.

24...♖e8 Vacating the flight square for the king is the only chance of continuing the fight.

24...♘e5 25.♕h6 ♖e8 26.♕xh7+ ♔f8 27.♕h8+ ♔e7 28.♕xf6+ ♔d7 29.♖xd4++−.

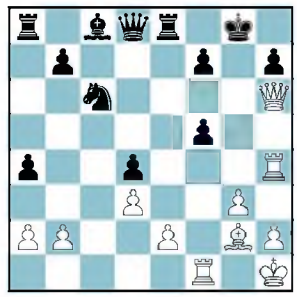
24...♕a5 25.♕h6 ♗f5 26.♗e4 ♗xe4+ (*26...♗g6 27.♗xg6+−*) 27.dxe4+−.

25.♕h6 f5 The most stubborn. Other moves lose more quickly.

25...♗e6 26.♗e4 f5 27.♗xf5 ♗xf5 28.♖xf5 f6 29.♕xh7+ ♔f8 30.♖g4+−.

Or 25...♖a5 26.♖xf6 ♘e5 27.♗e4.

Or 25...♘e5 26.♕xh7+ ♔f8 27.♕h8+ ♔e7 28.♕xf6+ ♔d7 29.♖xd4++−.



26.♗e4!! Swiercz must have missed this incredible resource when provoking his opponent to play 23.♘f6+!.

26...♖xe4 Relatively best.

26...♕xh4 27.gxh4 fxe4 28.♖g1++−.

26...♘e5 27.♕xh7+ ♔f8 28.♕h8+ ♔e7 29.♕xe5++−.

26...♘e7 27.♕xh7+ ♔f8 28.♕h6+ ♔g8 29.♕h8 mate.

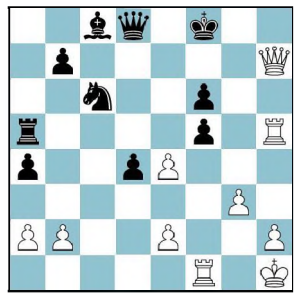
The beauty of Gledura's idea is best revealed by 26...♖a5 27.♖g4+!!.

27.dxe4 ♖a5 28.♖h5! Gledura continues with a few clever sneaky moves, which illustrate the well-known saying "The threat (♕xh7+) is stronger than its execution."

28...f6 28...♘e5 29.exf5 d3 (*29...♕d5+ 30.♔g1 ♕e4 31.♖g5+ ♘g6 32.f6 ♕e3+ 33.♔h1 ♕e4+ 34.♖f3 ♕b1+ 35.♔g2+−*) 30.f6 ♕d5+ 31.♖f3+−.

28...f4 29.gxf4 ♗g4 30.♖g1+−.

29.♕xh7+ ♔f8



30.♖h6! Yet another sneaky rook move by Gledura! He continues to skilfully increase the number of threats until it becomes unbearable even for Swiercz, who is famed for his tenacity.

30...♖e5 30...♗e6 31.♕h8+ ♗g8 32.♖xf6++−.

30...♘e7 31.♖xf6+ ♔e8 32.♕h8+ ♔d7 33.♖d6++−.

30...d3 31.♖g6 ♗e6 32.♕h8+ ♔e7 33.♕xf6+ ♔d7 34.♕xe6++−.

31.♕g6 ♔e7 A futile attempt to run away from White's attack, but anyway there was no defense. 31...♕d6 runs into 32.♖h8+ ♔e7 33.♕e8 mate. Or 31...♖e8 32.♖h7+−.

32.♕xf6+ ♔d7 33.♕d6+! ♔e8 34.♖h8+

Black resigned

Anatomy of a Chess Set Collection

TOUCHING HISTORY

Collecting chess sets from different periods is a great way to appreciate the rich history of the game and the people who have played it. Each set tells a story of a different era and can be a reminder of significant events both globally and personally.

By Chuck Grau

Chuck Grau is a chess collector and retired attorney. His collection emphasizes Soviet chess sets, and he publishes the website sovietchesssets.com. He founded the Facebook group Shakhmatnyye Kollektsionery, dedicated to Soviet and Late Tsarist chess collecting, and is an administrator of three other Facebook chess collecting groups. He is a member of Chess Collectors International and has published articles on Soviet chess sets and history in The Chess Collector Magazine and CCI-USA. He has collaborated with House of Staunton and NOJ Slovenia in the reproduction of various historical sets. He has served as the editor of New Hampshire Chess Journal, and as a trustee of the New Hampshire Chess Association.

Photos from Chuck Grau Collection.

In his recent book, *On The Collecting Of Chess Sets*, Holger Langer identifies six organizing principles for a chess set collection. According to Holger, one can organize a collection by:

1. a type or style of set, Staunton pattern sets being the most common;
2. the materials used – wooden sets, ivory sets, or plastic sets, for example;
3. the maker or makers – Jaques, British Chess Company, or Calvert among them;
4. geography – American, British, French, Eastern European, or Soviet sets;
5. time period – seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth, or twentieth century sets; and
6. specialized sets or equipment – travel sets, sets for the blind, chess clocks, and so on.

How collectors embrace these principles is highly idiosyncratic. My own collection is a good example. In this column, we will explore the varied dimensions of chess collecting through the prism of my collection, supplemented with specimens from the collections of others.

I was born not long after the end of the Second World War and came to chess as a player during the height of the Cold War. My appreciation for chess pieces is very much rooted in this history. I collect playing sets. I am particularly interested in sets that I played with in the 1960s and early 1970s and have acquired specimens for my collection. The very first set that I owned was a 3.25" plastic Lowe's "Tournament" set that my mother bought for me when I was home sick from school. My first non-school chess club met at the Racine, Wisconsin YMCA, where we played with Gallant Knight sets.

American Chess Sets

Not much later I journeyed north to Milwaukee to play in rated tournaments – the Wisconsin Open, the North Central Open, and the Western Open. There we played with the iconic Windsor Castle chessmen. To my knowledge, Windsor Castle chess pieces are the only chess pieces ever to grace the cover of *Sports Illustrated*, where they appeared with Lisa Lane in 1961. The historical record is replete with photos of Lane and of Bobby Fischer with Windsor Castle sets.

Through the United States Chess Federation's *Chess Life* magazine and catalogs, I learned of the Drueke Player's Choice set, and then Pacific Game Company's Cavalier plastic set, and ordered them. Specimens of these famous American sets now reside in my collection.

Windsor Castle chess pieces.

1960s No. 36 Drueke Player's Choice, acquired from Lisa Lane. Drueke No. 64 Grandmaster Board. Solora Clock, Frank Camaratta's former tournament clock.

A chess set can be more than just a game – it can be a window into the past and a source of inspiration for the future. The sets that have actually been played with hold an even greater value, as they have been touched and moved by the hands of history. Each mark, scratch, and dent can be a reminder of the battles fought on the board and the players who fought them. Owning one of these sets can feel like owning a piece of history, and each touch can bring back memories of the past.

American Chess Company chess pieces, circa 1900.

Pictured above is a No. 36 Drueke Player's Choice set that I obtained from former U.S. Women's Champion Lisa Lane. Introduced in 1965 at the National Open in Las Vegas to replace aging armies of brittle Windsor Castle Chessmen, these well-made pieces quickly became popular. Bobby Fischer's 1971 Candidates Match with Mark Taimanov was played with Player's Choice pieces. Their dominance was short-lived, as they soon faced competition from Pacific Game Company's Cavalier plastic chess pieces and were displaced as the go-to set of American clubs and tournaments by the ubiquitous "Club Set," a Lardy knock-off first introduced by Adult Leisure Products Corporation in 1964.

My friend, mentor, and perennial Racine City Champion, Wally Teubner owned a beautiful wooden Lardy set that we often played on. At the University of Wisconsin, where I ran the chess program for several years in the early 1970s, we played with the already ubiquitous plastic club set, its many iterations plastic copies of a wooden Lardy design.

My play in American events with American sets fueled my later collecting interest in all these sets, broadening to include other American playing sets of significance – American Chess Company sets circa 1900, the W.T. Pinney sets of the 1940s and 1950s, and the Steiner sets of the 1960s and used in the Piatigorsky tournaments. For these reasons, American tournament sets of the 20th century comprise one major group of my collection. I describe them as "Iconic Sets of the American Chessboard."

Early 1940s W.T. Pinney Club chess pieces. Unweighted for wartime.

1960s Steiner chess pieces.

Soviet Chess Sets

My blossoming interest in chess coincided with the height of Soviet domination of the sport, and the drama of Bobby Fischer's challenge to it. My junior high school library subscribed to *Chess Review*, which I devoured for stories and games of Fischer, Botvinnik, Smyslov, Petrosian, Tal, and Spassky, as well as other American stars – Sammy Reshevsky, William Lombardy, Robert Byrne, Lisa Lane, and others. My fascination with Soviet chess was in some ways ironic, as not long before we were being taught in school to duck and cover in anticipation of nuclear war, a terrible possibility made very real by the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. I imagine that my interest in Soviet chess sets and chess history may be my way of working through my childhood anxieties about nuclear war, but such ruminations are perhaps best left to psychoanalysis.

Soviet chess sets have become the primary focus of my collection, an avenue for exploring the history of Soviet chess and its role in establishing the ideological hegemony of the Soviet state. I have begun to explore them systematically in my website sovietchesssets.com and Facebook group, *Shakhmatnyye Kollektsionery*, which as of this writing has 3,000 members. Here are a few of the Soviet sets in my collection.

The first Soviet set pictured below has come to be known as the *Botvinnik–Flohr II* set because sets in this design were used in the famous 1935 Second Moscow International Tournament where Botvinnik and Flohr shared first place among an illustrious field. The "II" distinguishes the design from that of the set used in their 1933 match. The design evolved and remained a workhorse of high-level Soviet chess for decades, its last major iteration being used in the 1956 Moscow Olympiad and Bobby Fischer's famous blitz matches at the Moscow Chess Club in 1958. World champions who played with one version or another include Lasker, Capablanca, Euwe, Botvinnik, Smyslov, Tal, Petrosian, Spassky, Fischer, and Karpov. I have yet to see a photo of Kasparov playing with it, but it would not surprise me to find one. From a design perspective, the set incorporated several elements of Modernism and broke with various conventions of traditional Staunton design, thereby reflecting the Soviet conception of art as a tool of politics. The pictured set was made by a Leningrad artel named Prometheus. Artels were collectives of artisans, recognized under Soviet law, that shared costs and revenues and exhibited a great deal of creativity in their designs.

Late 1930s Gulag-made chess pieces.

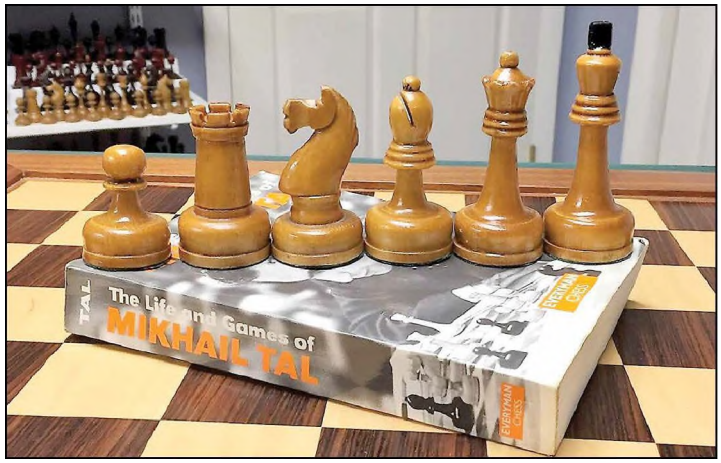
The next Soviet set was born of the need to provide pieces to the hundreds of thousands of new players Nikolay Krylenko's program of *Political Chess* brought to the game. The design is elegant, but quite simplified to facilitate its quick and economical mass production by a semi-skilled work force. The design first appeared in the late 1930s and was produced in a Gulag by children. It has come to be known by collectors as the *Mordovian* design as the most attractive versions were produced in Mordovian prison camps after World War II. Later versions, like the one used in the climactic Moscow tournament in the fictional television series *Queen's Gambit*, were manufactured in factories by wage laborers.

1952 Mordovian chess pieces.

Mid-1930s Botvinnik-Flohr II chess pieces.

The pictured pieces, of second quality, were made in Berezovsky Children's Penal Colony in Siberia, close to Krasnoyarsk. It is not surprising that Soviet Authorities turned to Gulags to manufacture the large number of sets needed for the exponentially expanding numbers of players. The old Artel system simply could not come close to supplying the numbers needed. Pieces in this style were produced from the late 1930s to the end of the Soviet Union, and it is safe to say they are the most numerous of any Soviet wooden set design.

I have an odd connection to the sets produced in the Mordovian prison camps. While in law school, I became familiar with the writings of a Bolshevik legal scholar by the name of Pashukanis. Several years after I graduated, I was working at the American Judicature Society in Chicago when a delegation of the Soviet Supreme Court, led by its Chief Justice, Mr. Chairman Lev Smirnov, paid us a visit as part of a tour organized by then U.S. Chief Justice Warren Burger. Smirnov was well-decorated, having been awarded the Order of Lenin, the Order of the October Revolution, the Red Banner of Labor, and other honorifics I no longer remember. He made his fame as the Soviets' Deputy Prosecutor at the Nuremburg war crime trials, but ascended to the pinnacle of the Soviet judiciary in no small measure by having presided over the 1966 show trial of two famous Soviet dissidents, Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuli Daniel, who were prosecuted for satire they had authored. Despite my junior status, I begged to be included in the tea my superiors were hosting in the Soviets' honor. I sat next to the friendly KGB officer accompanying the Soviet justices. I surmised he was KGB because he wasn't introduced, said nothing, looked ominous, and wore white socks. We each got to speak with Mr. Chairman Smirnov in order of seniority, so I naturally spoke dead last. The conversation had focused on mundane matters of judicial administration, and Mr. Chairman Smirnov was drifting off as I stepped to the plate. At the mention of Pashukanis's name, Smirnov rose from the dead like Lazarus, and regaled us with tales of the old Bolshevik, who had been one of his law school professors. Pashukanis was an ally of Nikolay Krylenko, who we know as the father of Soviet Chess. But Krylenko's day job was Chief Prosecutor of the Soviet Union, in which capacity he had staged more than a few show trials himself, sending many unfortunates to the Gulag or the executioner. Throughout the early and mid-1930s, Pashukanis and Krylenko battled Andrei Vyshinsky over the nature of Soviet criminal law, a matter of great importance to Stalin. Vyshinsky won the argument and went on to ascend the heights of the Soviet power structure. Pashukanis and Krylenko were shot. Like Vyshinsky, Smirnov was a survivor. He convicted Sinyavsky and David and banished them to a prison camp in Mordovia. Perhaps they made some of these chess sets there or knew those who did.



1959 Tal chess pieces.

A fourth example of Soviet design is the "Tal" set, so named because it appears on the cover of the former World Champion's autobiography *The Life And Games Of Mikhail Tal*. The book's cover bears a photo of Tal contemplating his position after Black's 32nd move in his game with Krogius, played in the 30th Soviet Championship in Yerevan in 1962, a Ruy Lopez won by Tal. The design first appeared in a 1940 friendship match between Estonia and Latvia, held in Tallinn before the annexation, but in an evolved form it soon became a staple of major Soviet tournaments held in and around Georgia SSR. Pictured below is the version used in the 1959 Soviet Championship held in Tbilisi, Georgia.

The Tal set is a good example of what collectors call "Soviet Stauntons." Among the typically Soviet design elements of Soviet Stauntons are the opposite colors of the king, queen, and bishop finials (here much of the black paint has worn off the bishop and queen finials); the modification of the king's cross to one not quite recognized by Christian iconography; and, with one notable exception, a knight not patterned after the Elgin Marbles. Among the features that distinguish the Tal set are the hefty wide and tall bases; the thick rook towers; the crisply carved angled merlons; the squat pawns; and the jaunty knights, which appear to lean backwards with their heads tilted upward. The traditional and idiosyncratically Soviet elements of Soviet Stauntons are illustrated above.

Olympic Chess Sets

My collection also includes smaller groups of Latin American, Western European, and Eastern European playing sets. My interest in them stems from my family's roots in Germany and Slovakia, the Olympiads and Interzonals held in those regions, and my namesake Roberto Grau, for many years the Argentine champion and an organizer of the fateful 1939 Buenos Aires Olympiad.

This, then, is an overview of my chess set collection and the thinking behind its composition. As you can see, what I collect is very much a function of my personal history and experience. In future columns, I will explore various sets in their historical and cultural contexts and discuss issues that confront every collector: deciding a focus, establishing provenance, restoration, reproduction, display and storage, and beyond.

Magistral 1939 Olimpico chess pieces. They are made from a phenol-formaldehyde plastic.

ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF POPULAR OPENING LINES

BOTVINNIK'S APPROACH TO THE CARLSBAD

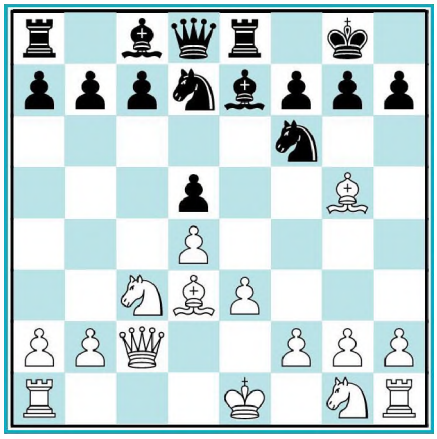
One of the most important contributors to the development of this popular variation in the QGD was certainly the legendary world champion Mikhail Botvinnik. His paramount work is almost fundamental in studying openings and early middlegame play, having been employed by a large number of his students, as well as generations of the present day.

By Patrick McCartney

Patrick McCartney is a Candidate Master, coach and writer from North Carolina. For three and a half years he has written a chess column for the blog of his local chess club in Charlotte. Outside of chess, Patrick is also a Silver Life Master in the American Contract Bridge League (ACBL) and spends the majority of his spare time in competitive activities such as fantasy sports and casino gambling, all of this while working as a Quality Assurance Analyst for a major bank.

In American Chess Magazine issue 30, we explained the origin and significance of the Carlsbad Pawn Structure. With the passing of time, different approaches have been adopted in order to break through Black's solid setup.

Here, we are going to look at White's other popular approach to the Carlsbad pawn structure. After the introductory moves **1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 exd5 5.♗g5 ♗e7 6.e3 0-0 7.♗d3 ♘bd7 8.♕c2 ♖e8**



...we had seen in previously presented games White play ♘f3 and 0-0, Black play ...c6 and ...♘f8, and then White attempt the minority attack. We saw that Black can counter with a kingside attack or by plugging up the queenside and trying to get his knight to the c4 outpost. A lot of this was made possible due to the fairly slow nature of the minority attack.

THE BOTVINNIK PAWN CENTER

In his prime, Botvinnik popularized another approach, which can be viewed as being more aggressive than the minority attack. He was by no means the inventor of this approach, but it was seen far less frequently until Botvinnik's success with it, and later, when Kasparov, a student of Botvinnik's, used the idea to good effect. The idea is for White to expand in the center rather than on the queenside. He will develop his knight on e2 rather than f3, and look to play f2–f3 and e3–e4.

When White achieves the move e3–e4, there are four possible pawn structures that can be reached:
1) If Black captures on e4, and White recaptures with his f-pawn, White remains with hanging pawns.
2) If Black captures on e4, and White recaptures with a piece, White remains with an isolated queen pawn.
3) If Black does not capture on e4, and White advances his e-pawn, White obtains an advanced center, and often a blockade, similar to that seen against the French Defense.
4) If Black does not capture on e4, and White trades pawns on d5, then the balanced pawn center arises with both sides having blocked, opposing isolated queen pawns.

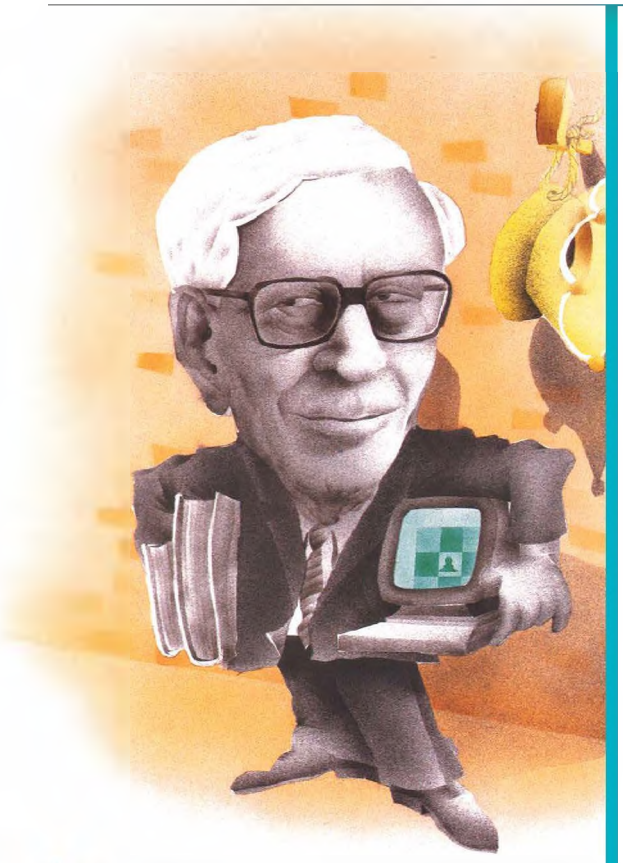
The Hanging Pawns

In our first game, we will see Botvinnik successfully make use of hanging pawns.

D36
Mikhail Botvinnik
Paul Keres
Soviet Championship, Moscow 1952

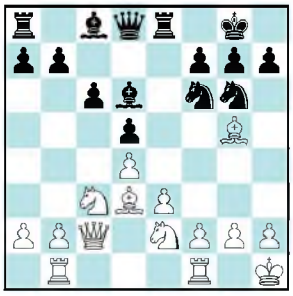
Let's continue from the above diagram.

9.♘ge2 It should be noted that after this move the minority attack is still playable, as placing the knight on e2 rather than f3 contains some hidden possibilities that may escape Black's attention. You may recall the game Euwe - Rubinstein where Black had quickly expanded on the kingside. We see now that the knight being on f3 gave away White's plan. He couldn't set up the Botvinnik pawn center because the knight was blocking the f-pawn. Here, with the knight on e2 instead of f3, the fact that White has not committed to just one approach may force Black to play a few non-committal moves while waiting to see what White does, which in turn can slow down his attack. This "problem" (if it really is a problem) for Black has caused a few players to take a slightly different approach to the Queen's Gambit Declined. Some will begin by playing 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 and if 3.♘c3 they'll play the Nimzo-Indian, specifically to avoid this line we have right now, and only play 3...d5 if White commits to 3.♘f3, removing this very possibility of White setting up the Botvinnik pawn center. That alone should say a lot about Botvinnik's approach, that it has caused many players playing Black to think carefully and tackle this opening differently!
9...♘f8 10.0-0 c6 11.♖ab1 Oh, so we have the minority attack coming, right?

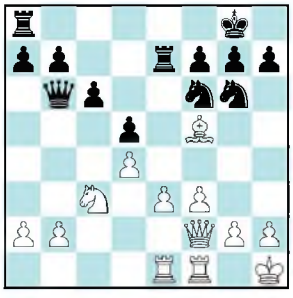


▲ Mikhail Botvinnik *Caricature by Jovan Prokopljevic*

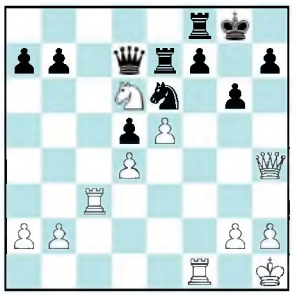
11...♗d6 12.♔h1 ♘g6



13.f3 Nope! Try again! Now we see Botvinnik's intentions. He is looking to expand in the center with the move e3-e4.
13...♗e7 14.♖be1 White relocates his rook to the e-file. The e-file and f−file are typically the best files for the rooks when going for the central attack.
14...♘d7 15.♗xe7 ♖xe7 16.♘g3 ♘f6 17.♕f2 ♗e6 18.♘f5 ♗xf5 19.♗xf5 ♕b6



White is now ready to expand in the center.
20.e4 dxe4 21.fxe4 After the trade on e4, White is left with hanging pawns in the center, which can often be a double-edged sword. However, close analysis in this case shows that Black's pieces are poorly placed to break up White's center. In fact, Black has to watch out or else White will voluntarily advance his hanging pawns! With total domination of the center and Black having less space to maneuver, White has a clear advantage.
21...♖d8 22.e5 This same game was covered by Pete Tamburro in his column of the December 2021 edition of *British Chess Magazine*. He makes an important point here, stating that White is "Not only chasing the knight off the f-file, this is also a vacating move so the white knight can enter e4 with awful consequences for Black."
22...♘d5 23.♘e4 With White's significant space advantage, he has no interest in trading pieces.
23...♘f8 24.♘d6 ♕c7 25.♗e4 ♘e6 26.♕h4 g6 27.♗xd5 After forcing Black to have to defend f7 and h7, White now proceeds to weaken Black's pawn structure...
27...cxd5 28.♖c1 ...and then take over the newly opened file. Black has nothing to counter this, and is completely lost at this point.
28...♕d7 29.♖c3 ♖f8



30.♘f5 Now tactics take over. The knight is taboo. It should also be noted that Tamburro points out in his article that "If Botvinnik rushes with 30.♖h3 then 30...f5 gives Keres some hope of surviving as *en passant* would lose the knight. Instead, Botvinnik shatters the dream with a devastating knight move. Keres could have resigned here."
30...♖fe8 30...gxf5?? 31.♖g3+ ♘g7 32.♕f6 and mate cannot be stopped.
31.♘h6+ ♔f8 32.♕f6 ♘g7 33.♖cf3 ♖c8 34.♘xf7 Black's position falls apart.
34...♖e6 35.♕g5 ♘f5 Attempting to block the file doesn't work. But then, of course, it's not like Black has a legitimate line of defense.
36.♘h6 ♕g7 37.g4 Botvinnik's well-timed e3-e4 advance gave him a dominating position.

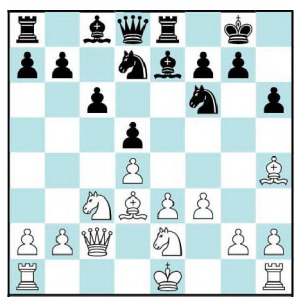
> **The idea is for White to expand in the center rather than on the queenside. He will develop his knight on e2 rather than f3, and look to play f2-f3 and e3-e4.**

The Advanced Center

In the next game, we will see Botvinnik exploit the advanced center.

D36
Mikhail Botvinnik
Bent Larsen
Noordwijk, 1965

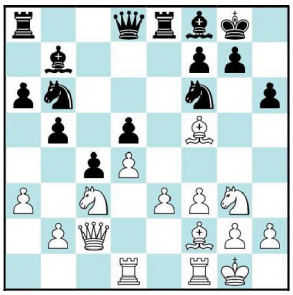
1.c4 e6 2.♘c3 d5 3.d4 ♘f6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.♗g5 c6 6.e3 ♗e7 7.♕c2 0-0 8.♗d3 ♘bd7 9.♘ge2 h6 10.♗h4 ♖e8 11.f3



We once again see Botvinnik beginning the process of executing the Botvinnik Pawn Center. Of course, White is not intending to play e3-e4 immediately.

For starters, before opening up and expanding in the center, White needs to get his king castled, amongst other things.

11...c5 12.0-0 a6 13.♖ad1 b5 14.♗f2 c4 15.♗f5 ♘b6 16.♘g3 ♗f8 17.a3 ♗b7



White has the e4 square well covered by the f-pawn, as well as by both his knights, queen, and light-squared bishop. The d4 pawn is well protected by the rook on d1 and the bishop on f2. The last thing White must consider is that bishop on f5. Black can play ...g7-g6 in response to e3-e4, which would deflect the bishop away from guarding e4, but given the fact that the bishop has an escape route, and that the e4 square is still well guarded even without the participation of the bishop on f5, we can conclude that White is ready for the e3-e4 break.

18.e4 g6 Unlike the previous game, trading on e4 here is significantly worse for Black than the game move. In fact, 18...dxe4? is likely losing outright. After 19.fxe4, there are tactics looming everywhere for White that would make it hard for Black to move.

A) For example, after 19...g6, White can play 20.♗xg6! fxg6 21.e5 and, with both the knight and g-pawn hanging, Black would likely have to return the material as allowing a queen intrusion on g6 would be fatal.

B) In addition, even moves such as 19...♕e7 lead to issues for Black. White can respond with the straightforward 20.e5, but one must also consider loose pieces. White can also play 20.♖de1 with ideas involving 21.d5!. The game move is considered Black's best, but White's position is still advantageous.

19.♗h3 a5 20.e5 White goes with the advanced center. The central pawn structure resembles a position similar to that seen in the French Defense, but there are a couple of differences.

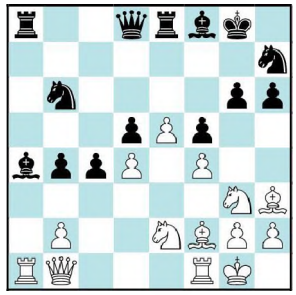
The first is that there is no black pawn on e6, which gives Black an open diagonal for his bishop, and we will see the light-squared bishops traded off within the next 10 moves. However, on the plus side for White, the tension that usually occurs between the black c-pawn and white d-pawn has been relieved as Black has already advanced ...c5-c4.

The most significant factor in the position is White's space advantage, and notice that no pieces, and only one set of pawns, have been traded off yet, making it difficult for Black to maneuver his pieces around.

20...b4 21.♘ce2 ♘h7? This move, however, is a mistake and allows White a winning advantage. Better is 21...♗c6, which limits White to a small advantage, the point being that 22.exf6? can be answered by 22...♗a4 with equality.

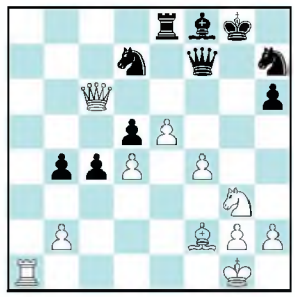
22.f4 ♗c6 23.♖a1 23.♖de1 was even stronger.

23...♗a4 24.♕b1 f5 25.axb4 axb4



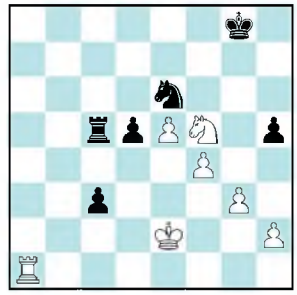
Now White goes for the breakthrough with a piece sacrifice.

26.♘xf5! gxf5 27.♗xf5 ♕e7 28.♘g3 ♗d7 29.♗xd7 ♘xd7 30.♕g6+ ♕g7 31.♕c6 ♖xa1 32.♖xa1 ♕f7



33.♖a7 ♘xe5 Black returns the piece, but it might have been better to be more stubborn and play 33...♘b8, when White has an advantage after 34.♕a4, but still has work to do to convert the full point. The game move might as well be a plea of no contest.

34.dxe5 ♕e6 35.♕xe6+ ♖xe6 36.♘f5 ♖c6 37.♔f1 c3 38.bxc3 bxc3 39.♗e3 ♗c5 40.♗xc5 ♖xc5 41.♖a1 ♘f8 42.♔e2 ♘e6 43.g3 h5



44.♔d3 White has the two passed pawns well under control.

44...d4 45.♘d6 ♖c7 46.♘e4 ♔h7 47.f5 ♘d8 48.♘f6+ ♔h6 49.♘d5 ♖b7 50.e6 ♘c6 51.♖a6 ♘e5+ 52.♔xd4 Black resigned as he cannot stop both of White's threats, namely e7+ and capture of the c-pawn.

The Isolated Queen's Pawn

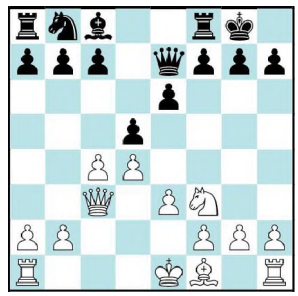
In the following game, we will see Kasparov, a student of Botvinnik's, successfully bring about the isolated queen pawn, resulting from a capture on e4 and recapturing with a piece. The way in which the game reaches a Carlsbad pawn structure may therefore be slightly different from a traditional path. It will result from White playing to completely prevent the ...c6-c5 pawn break, and in essence isolate the light-squared bishop to the point where it will be deemed completely ineffective, then White will be ready to change gear and win by means of tactics.

D55

Garry Kasparov	2715
Robert Huebner	2605

Hamburg, 1985

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♗e7 5.♗g5 0-0 6.♕c2 ♘e4 7.♗xe7 ♕xe7 8.e3 ♘xc3 9.♕xc3



So here we have a common problem for

Black in the Queen's Gambit Declined. In this game, White has not traded on d5, or at least not yet. This trade would free Black's light-squared bishop, and his subsequent plan would be fairly simple to figure out. Execution of it may not be so simple, but with the c8-h3 diagonal open, Black will eventually develop his bishop along that diagonal.

But here Black has a dilemma. He does not want to take on c4 because White has not yet moved his bishop from f1. Typically, Black wants to wait for White to move that bishop before trading on c4. Combine this with the lack of a trade on d5, and having his own pawn still sitting on e6, leads Black having to make a very difficult decision. He is running out of non-committal moves.

9...b6 Black decides to fianchetto the bishop, but thereby allows a move for White that takes advantage of this pawn push.

10.cxd5 This is a fairly well-known idea. White trades on d5 before Black is able to recapture with the bishop, which would be possible if White waited just one more move to do so, and the black bishop was already on b7.

10...exd5 So now, with ...b7-b6 played and the c6 square weakened, Black would like to play the move ...c7-c5, which would give Black, on the queenside, what White typically faces in the Botvinnik pawn center. If it were Black's move right now, and he played ...c7-c5, you could visualise a capture occur on c5, which would in turn lead to either hanging pawns or an isolated queen pawn, depending on how Black recaptured. Alternatively if White did not capture on c5 then Black could advance ...c5-c4, or trade on d4, which would lead to the balanced pawn center if White takes back with the e-pawn or else an isolated queen pawn position if he captures on d4 with his knight or queen.

White has no intention of allowing such play for Black, and so Kasparov's next move makes a lot of sense.

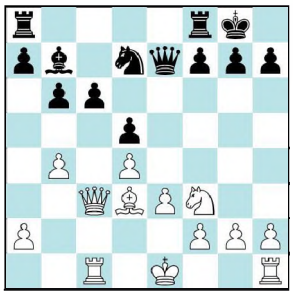
11.b4 White prevents the ...c7-c5 push by Black, but since leaving the pawn on c7 will simply result in weak light squares, combined with the c-pawn being a sitting duck, Black's next move is virtually forced, either now or within the next move or two.

11...c6 And now we see the Carlsbad pawn structure on the board. In this case, the minority attack would be useless. With the b-pawn already on b6, playing for b4-b5 would merely allow Black to by-pass and play ...c6-c5. White's main goal here is to prevent this advance, and force Black to maintain a passive bishop. Therefore, White will need to find the right time to execute Botvinnik's idea in the center. There is a white knight on f3 so he may need to move it at some point to promote the f2-f3 push and set up e3-e4.

However, we will see in this game that while that might be necessary in order to establish hanging pawns in the center, the preliminary f2-f3 push is not always necessary if White plans to take back on e4 with a piece, thereby creating the isolated queen pawn scenario, as is the case in this game.

> **With the b-pawn already on b6, playing for b4-b5 would merely allow Black to by-pass and play ...c6-c5. White's main goal here is to prevent this advance, and force Black to maintain a passive bishop.**

12.♖c1 ♗b7 13.♗d3 ♘d7

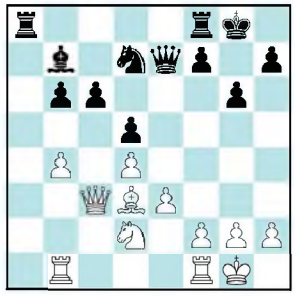


14.♖b1 This move continues to prevent ...c6-c5 tactically, due to the loose bishop on b7.

14...♕d8 15.0-0 a5 16.a3 axb4 17.axb4 Black was able to open the a-file for his rook, but White has maintained his grip on c5.

17...g6 18.♘d2 White is preparing the e3-e4 break.

18...♕e7



19.e4 We see here that White advances the e-pawn without playing f3. In fact 19.f3 was not possible now as the e-pawn would hang with check, and moves like 19.♖fe1 are too slow. So White accepts the isolated queen pawn if Black chooses to capture on e4 immediately. In return, White maintains his grip on c5, leaving the bishop on b7 passive. It can't simply move away to an open diagonal right now as the c-pawn would merely hang.

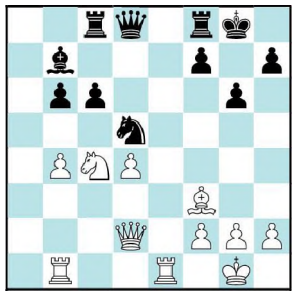
19...dxe4 Black takes the e-pawn, creating the isolated queen pawn scenario.

20.♗xe4 The correct piece with which to recapture, exerting additional pressure and a pin on the c6 pawn.

Taking with the knight would be a mistake as 20.♘xe4 allows the break 20...c5!, opening up the bishop on b7 and releasing himself from White's grip on c5 tactically, because the knight on e4 would be hanging, thereby allowing Black to equalize.

20...♖ac8 21.♖fe1 Once again, posing a threat (this time 22.♗xg6), and forcing Black to react.

21...♕d8 22.♘c4 ♘f6 23.♗f3 ♘d5 24.♕d2

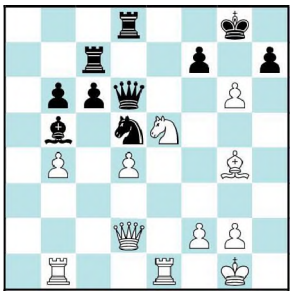


24...♗a6 24...c5? still fails, this time to 25.dxc5 bxc5 26.b5 and Black has a hard time making a move. For example, 26...♖e8 would allow White to deflect the queen away from d5 via 27.♖xe8+ ♕xe8 and the knight falls.

Instead, Black would be forced to make a move like 26...♖b8 when White can continue the attack with 27.♖bd1.

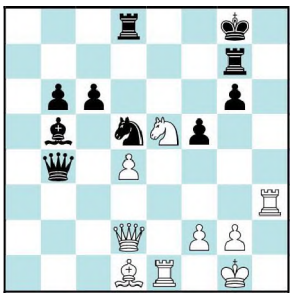
25.♘e5 ♗b5 The black bishop may now

be in front of the pawn, but notice that it is still not hitting anything and the f1-a6 diagonal is an easy diagonal for White to work around in this position.
26.♖ec1 ♕d6 27.h4 ♖fd8 28.h5 ♘e7 29.♖e1 ♖c7 30.♗g4 ♘d5 31.hxg6



Black has been under intense pressure all game and here he finally cracks. He had to play 31...fxg6, with a small advantage for White, but there is nothing concrete to say that Black is losing.

After the game move, Black will have problems down the h-file. White can transfer his heavy pieces over to the h-file a lot faster than Black can.
31...hxg6?? 32.♖b3 f5 33.♗d1 ♖g7 33...♖h7 doesn't help. After 34.♖g3, Black will need to do something about the g6 pawn, which will mean either the rook goes back to g7, relinquishing the h-file, or allow other problems to occur. For example, after 34...♘e7, White has 35.♕a2+.
34.♖h3 ♕xb4



The bishop covers e2 and the knight covers e3. White cannot protect his rook, and therefore must trade queens, right?
35.♕h6!! No! White gives up the rook on e1! This is actually a hard move to find. Sure, the mate threat is easy to see, and so the bishop on d1 is safe. The important factors are seeing that the king is totally safe on h2, and that White has a follow up to the black king running away, since he'll be down a full rook for the time being.
35...♕xe1+ 36.♔h2 ♔f8 The only move to avoid mate.
37.♘xg6+ ♔g8 37...♔f7 38.♘e5+ ♔f8 39.♖g3 is also winning for White.
38.♕h8+ ♔f7 39.♕xd8 and **Black resigned**.
Let's consider Black's possible moves here.

A) 39...♔xg6 loses immediately after 40.♗h5+ followed by 41.♗f7 mate.

B) 39...♖xg6 also leads to mate after 40.♖h7+ ♖g7 41.♗h5+ ♔e6 42.♖h6+ ♖g6 43.♖xg6+ ♔f7 44.♖h6+ ♔g7 45.♕h8 mate.

C) 39...♕e8 40.♘e5+ ♔f8 41.♖h8+ and the black queen falls.

An absolute gem by one of the best players of all time!

The Balanced Pawn Center

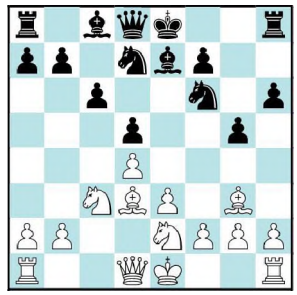
In the next game, we will see the legendary eight-time U.S. Champion Samuel Reshevsky execute a successful attack with the balanced pawn centre.

D35

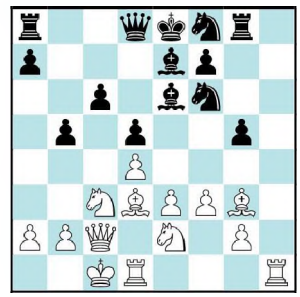
Samuel Reshevsky
Albert Simonson

USA Championship, New York 1951

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.♗g5 ♘bd7 6.e3 c6 7.♗d3 ♗d6 Here, we will see Black trying to adopt a more aggressive approach compared to the main lines. He immediately places the bishop on a more active diagonal at the cost of keeping the f6 knight in a pin.
8.♘ge2 h6 9.♗h4 g5 10.♗g3 ♗e7

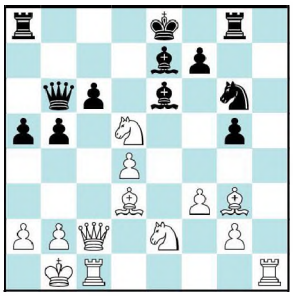


Now we see what Black's idea was. He is willing to weaken his kingside and follow up by retreating his bishop in order to avoid the trade of his good bishop, a trade often made on the e7 square in this opening. The problem with this idea though is that it creates a hook for White on the kingside – of which he immediately takes advantage.
11.h4 Already we see a threat. White threatens to win the g-pawn due to the resulting pin of the h-pawn because of the unprotected rook on h8. Black could move the knight, to allow the bishop to cover g5, but then Black has a very weak isolated h-pawn that can become a long-term problem. Castling kingside at this point would be extremely risky without first bringing more pieces to the kingside to account for the weakened pawn structure on that side of the board, and therefore Black has little choice but to move the rook, eliminating the possibility of castling kingside. As it turns out, we will see the black king remain in the center for the entire game.
11...♖g8 12.hxg5 hxg5 13.♕c2 ♘f8 14.0-0-0 Given his control of the open h-file, White decides to castle queenside, unlike the other three games we've looked at thus far with Botvinnik's pawn center.
14...♗e6 15.f3 We see the start of Botvinnik's idea.
15...b5

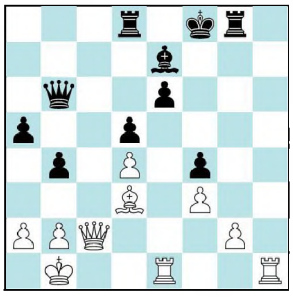


As Black cannot castle kingside. with the text move, he declares his intention to keep his king in the center rather than castle queenside. So, if the black king is going to remain in the center, why not try to attack its white counterpart? That said, while there is the old adage "An attack on the flank is best met by a reaction in the center", I cannot say I have ever heard it be said the other way around!
16.♔b1 ♕b6 17.♖c1 a5 18.e4 We finally see the pawn break by White. If Black were to trade pawns right now, White would have the choice between the hanging pawns center by recapturing with the pawn, or going for the isolated queen pawn center by taking with the c3 knight and seeking to take advantage of Black's severely weakened c6 pawn.
18...♘g6 Black does not take on e4, allowing White the other two options that we discussed earlier.
19.exd5 White goes for the balanced pawn center on the basis that taking twice with a piece on d5 fails tactically for Black. Had it worked, and Black were to do that, we'd

have another version of the isolated queen pawn center.
19...♘xd5 20.♘xd5



20...cxd5 This move is forced, leading to the balanced pawn center. As Robert Leininger states in his book *Middlegame Strategy with the Carlsbad Pawn Structure*, after 20...♗xd5 21.♘c3 ♕xd4 22.♘xd5 ♕xd5 23.♕xc6+ ♕xc6 24.♖xc6 b4 25.♖e1, "White's position is overwhelming." I have to say that I agree with him. Taking the analysis further, after 25...♔f8 26.♖c7 ♗f6 27.♗c4 ♘h8 28.f4 ♔g7 29.fxg5 ♗xg5 30.♖c5 ♗f6 31.♖f5 ♖gc8 32.♗d5 ♖a7 33.♖ef1 ♖d8 34.♗c4 ♗d4 35.♖1f4, Black's position is about to fall apart.
21.♘c3 b4 22.♘b5 ♔f8 23.♘c7 ♖d8 24.♖ce1 ♘f4 Again, as Robert Leininger points out, White was threatening to win a piece by 25.♘xe6+ fxe6 26.♗xg6+.
25.♗xf4 gxf4 26.♘xe6+ fxe6



These last two trades that White initiated have resulted in Black being left with a backward e-pawn. Now one could argue that this is similar to the backward pawn in the minority attack but that is not the case here. As many books have mentioned, there is a concept known as the theory of two weaknesses. In the minority attack, Black's backward pawn on c6 is often his only weakness, and is why he can usually maintain equality in those lines.

Here, on the other hand, Black has many weaknesses across the board. The f4 pawn is slightly weak because the e-pawn cannot get to e5 to guard it. That said, there

Mikhail Botvinnik

is one other glaring weakness in Black's position. It's his king! It is probably safe to say that Black's position is already lost, and we will see here that it doesn't take long for White to execute his attack.
27.♖h6 ♖d6 28.♕c8+ ♕d8 29.♕c1 ♗g5 30.♖hxe6 ♖xe6 31.♖xe6 ♔f7 32.♖e5 ♖e8 33.♖f5+ ♔g7 34.♕c6 ♖e1+ 35.♔c2 ♕e7 36.♖xd5 ♖e2+ 37.♔b3 White's king is safe where it is. Black's is not. White is up two pawns, and Black's pieces are being overworked just simply protecting each other. There is also the looming threat of 38.♖d7, winning the queen. So **Black resigned.**

The Botvinnik Pawn Center in the 21st Century

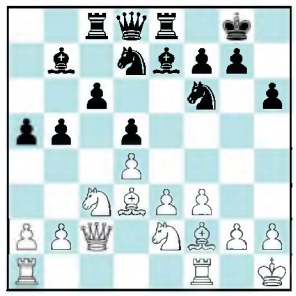
I am going to conclude this article with a game from a few years ago played by the American GM Daniel Naroditsky. We will see the hanging pawns center in this game.

D36

Daniel Naroditsky	2815
Yoseph Taher	2512

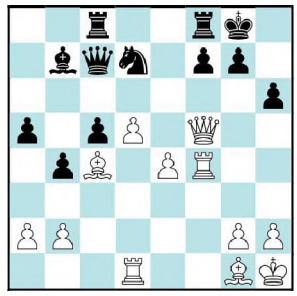
Internet 2018

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.♗g5 ♗e7 6.♕c2 0-0 7.e3 c6 8.♗d3 h6 9.♗h4 ♖e8 10.♘ge2 ♘bd7 11.0-0 a5 12.f3 b5 13.♔h1 ♗b7 14.♗f2 ♖c8



Here we have a slightly unusual scenario in that Black has expanded quickly on the queenside – but this doesn't work out very well for him.
15.e4 b4 16.♘a4 dxe4 17.fxe4 Here we have the hanging pawns center. Watch out though, we will see these pawns advance fairly rapidly in this game.
17...♘g4 18.♗g1 ♗g5 19.♘c5 ♘xc5 20.♕xc5 ♕c7

21.♗c4 Hitting f7 and forcing Black to guard the pawn passively, taking the pressure off the hanging pawns.
21...♖f8 21...♘f6 is not an improvement. After 22.♘g3 ♔h8, White can play 23.e5! with a clear advantage.
22.♕f5 ♘f6 23.♘f4 c5 24.d5 ♗xf4 25.♖xf4 ♘d7 26.♖d1

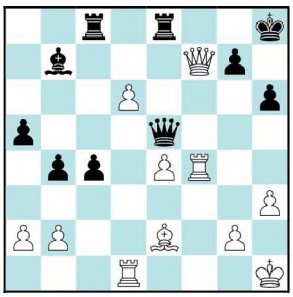


26...♕d6 Trying to plug the hole and halt the mobility of the white central pawns by 26...♘e5 fails miserably to 27.d6!, winning a piece. Therefore Black plays the game move in order to prepare 27...♘e5.
27.h3 ♘e5 28.♗e2 c4 29.♗d4 ♖fe8?? The text move loses on the spot. Black can

probably put up stronger resistance with the move 29...f6, when 30.♖f2 ♖fe8 31.a3 ♖c7 32.axb4 axb4 33.♗h5 ♖d8 34.♖a1 ♗a6 35.♗xe5 fxe5 36.♕f3 ♗b5 gives White only a slight advantage and Black should be able to hold the position.

30.♗xe5 Now the f-pawn falls, no matter how Black recaptures.

30...♕xe5 31.♕xf7+ ♔h8 32.d6



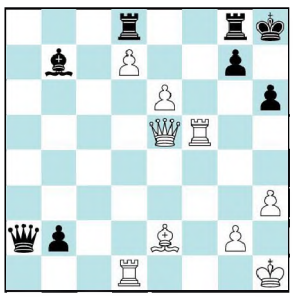
And now the pawn is going to be a problem for Black, forcing his rook to defend passively.

32...♖cd8 33.♕f5 ♕xb2 34.d7 ♖g8 This is a pattern worth remembering. A king on h8 with a rook on g8 and pawn on g7 can often lead to h-file tactics, and that is actually how the black king gets mated in this game!

35.♕xc4 a4 36.e5 The second of the hanging central pawns joins the attack.

36...b3 37.axb3 axb3 38.e6 ♕a3 In order to be able to advance the b-pawn, the black queen must abandon the long diagonal. This gives White the opportunity to pin the g-pawn against the king, leading to a mating attack.

39.♕c5 ♕a2 40.♕e5 b2



So now White needs to play a defensive move like 41.♗d3 to prevent the pawn from promoting, right?

41.♕h5!! Not so! As mentioned previously, Black's own rook and pawn box in his own king which will be mated!

41...b1♕ 42.♖xh6+ Black resigned as 42...♕h7 43.♖xh7+ ♔xh7 44.♕h5 is checkmate! This whole mating attack was made possible by the advance of the hanging pawns in the center, forcing one rook to block the d-pawn, and leaving the other rook with nowhere to go except g8, leaving his own majesty with no breathing space!

Conclusion

The Carlsbad pawn structure has a very rich history. The formation itself dates back to the 19th century, but it only really became popular in the 1920s when openings such as the Queen's Gambit Declined were played intensively. Remember, the world championship match in 1927 between Alekhine and Capablanca featured solely QGD games except games 1 and 3! However the pawn structure discussed here got its name from its extensive use in the tournament in Carlsbad 1929.

The minority attack is still very popular today at amateur level. It is seen rather less frequently at top level because of its drawish nature. Black often gets a single weakness, but it is very difficult for White to create that second weakness which will stretch Black's defense to the limit.

Black can also try to prevent the minority attack with the move ...b7-b5, but he must make sure that White cannot lodge a knight on e5, exerting heavy pressure on his weak c6-pawn, and that he himself cannot be denied getting a knight to c4, typically by being prevented to play ...♘b6 or ...♘d6. If Black cannot plug the c-file with his knight, he is usually in trouble.

The Botvinnik pawn structure is a far more dynamic approach, and is still popular today. Black's life is a lot more difficult here as it is not about strong defense of one particular weakness, but rather a question of how to halt White's initiative, which leaves little room for error if Black wants to survive. We saw some beautiful attacks by Botvinnik, Reshevsky, Kasparov, and Naroditsky. The good thing about this pawn structure is that it is very rich in strategic concepts. It is also completely sound, highly popular today, and very well covered in literature. If you are interested in further research of this pawn structure, I would recommend the following:

1) That you obtain a used copy of *Middlegame Strategy with the Carlsbad Pawn Structure* by Robert Leininger as I am pretty sure it is out of print. It is an excellent book!
2) Next, I must suggest a 20-year-old classic that *is* still in print - Matthew Sadler's *Queen's Gambit Declined*. Although it does not exclusively cover the Exchange Variation, this pawn structure appears frequently in its pages, and in my opinion it is one of the best books ever written on the Queen's Gambit, adopting a Question-and-Answer approach to explain things.
3) Beyond that, there are many repertoire books on 1.d4 for White, or the QGD for Black. As far as White repertoire books are concerned, the vast majority of them recommend either the Exchange QGD or the Catalan against the Queen's Gambit Declined because the Exchange QGD is easy to understand (though not easy to execute!). The Catalan is a popular option because it can be used against both the QGD and Nimzo-Indian. So try to pick up one of the many books that recommend the Exchange Variation. For those playing Black, *Declining the Queen's Gambit* by John Cox is an excellent book which includes coverage of the Exchange Variation from Black's perspective.
4) I would also recommend studying Queen's Gambit games played by Botvinnik and Kasparov. Many wrongfully view Kasparov as more of a 1.e4 player, but the truth is that Kasparov is not another Fischer. He made major contributions to the Queen's Gambit in the final quarter of the 20th century, and he played 1.d4 just as often as he did 1.e4.

But even if you aren't a 1.d4 player, or one who plays the Queen's Gambit or Nimzo-Indian as Black, the Carlsbad pawn structure is well worth studying, if nothing other than for the purpose of learning overall sound chess strategy.

Fresh Leaves from the Bookshelf

By FM Carsten Hansen

Carsten Hansen is a FIDE Master and FIDE Trainer, residing in Bayonne, New Jersey. He has written more than forty books, mostly on chess openings and chess tactics. You can find his work on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

Books, books, books. They never stop coming, and I am thankful for that because our game is so wonderful and broad that it can be enjoyed by enthusiasts at all levels – and indeed for all of us, who have not yet reached the very top echelons in the chess hierarchy, there is so much material and knowledge to be distilled and absorbed that we will never get bored.

This time we cover historical, biographical, and instructional books as well as a new opening manual; all with new interesting insights as well as what is already known – something for all of us to enjoy.

It would be remiss of me not to mention a couple of new books of my own – one jointly with Cyrus Lakdawala on English IM Michael Basman, who sadly passed away toward the end of last year, featuring his liking for 1.g4 and 1...g5, and the other the fourth and latest volume in the *Daily Chess Training Chess Tactics* series.

Last but not least, there's a new volume of Chess Informant available, the 155th(!!!) in the series. The format has changed over the years, but it is still a phenomenal read with lots of brilliant material.

10 NOTEWORTHY BOOKS

01	**Kings, Queens & Rookies** *by Peter Boel & Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam (New In Chess 2023)*	★★★★½
02	**A Chess Biography of Rudolph Spielmann** *by Grigory Bogdanovich (Elk & Ruby 2023)*	★★★★★
03	**Typical Sicilian** *by Karsten Muller (JBV Chess Books 2023)*	★★★★½
04	**Chessboard Combat** *by Joel Benjamin (New In Chess 2023)*	★★★★★
05	**Battle of Endgames** *by Ray Cannon (Self-published 2021)*	★★★½☆
06	**Irrational Chess** *by Cyrus Lakdawala (Everyman Chess 2023)*	★★★★★
07	**The Modern Gurgenidze** *by Jaan Ehlvest (Russell Enterprises 2023)*	★★★★½
08	**Endgame Virtuoso Magnus Carlsen – Vol 2** *by Tibor Karolyi (New In Chess 2023)*	★★★★★
09	**Chess Lessons from a Champion Coach** *by Thomas Engqvist (Batsford 2023)*	★★★½☆
10	**The Wizard of Warsaw** *by Tomasz Lissowski and Grigory Bogdanovich (Elk & Ruby 2023) 5**	★★★★★

01 Kings, Queens & Rookies – The Tata Steel Chess Tournament – A Celebration of 85 Years

Edited by Peter Boel & Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam

$24.99 (hardback) ★★★★½

This book is a celebration of a tradition that started back in 1938. Of course, the name back then wasn't Tata Steel, but the place Wijk aan Zee or Beverwijk is more or less the same. The origins of the tournament were less auspicious than today when it is considered the Wimbledon of chess, where each winter, the top players congregate on the windswept beaches in the Netherlands.

The book is beautifully produced in hardback with thick, high-quality glitzy paper and brilliant, mostly in color, photographs.

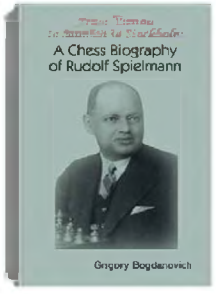
Aside from covering the history of the tournament, there are ten portraits and twelve annotated games, including some of the most brilliant games in chess history; who can forget that Kasparov – Topalov game from the 1999 edition?

It is a beautiful book, and for fans of this tournament, it could serve as a nice memento or coffee table book.

02 From Vienna to Munich to Stockholm – A Chess Biography of Rudolph Spielmann

by Grigory Bogdanovich

$40.95 (hardback) ★★★★★



We start off with an amazing biography of one of the giants of the early 20th century – the so-called Last Knight of the King's Gambit, Rudolf Spielmann. If you're thinking, wait a minute, wasn't there another new book on Spielmann, then your memory serves you well, This was *The Chess Diary of Young Rudolf Spielmann*, published by *American Chess Magazine*, which we covered very recently.

The present book is massive, 460 pages, and

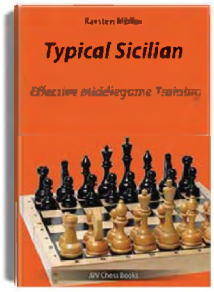
it is fantastic. I received the hardback edition, which makes it even more of a treasure. There are a total of 213 games, counting both complete and part games, which have been carefully annotated, leaning on both Spielmann's own and other contemporary annotations but then diving further into the analysis with the support of modern engines, though never leaving you thinking that the author is just reciting machine output. The notes are extensive, explaining both Spielmann's style, approach, and thinking, but also allowing the reader to follow the games and learn from the early 20th-century champion who won games from all of the best players in the world, including the world champions.

It is a truly wonderful book that I hope will find a broad audience because Spielmann's games were wonderful gems.

03 Typical Sicilian – Effective Middlegame Training

by Karsten Mueller

$24.95 (paperback)



German Grandmaster Karsten Mueller is easily one of the most productive authors around today, we have covered several of his books in the past in this column, and before that, he established himself as one of the world's leading authorities on endgames. But, of course, Mueller knows about more than endgames, and thus the topic of this volume is the Sicilian Defense, from which he has picked 156 training positions, all apparently from various variations of the Open Sicilian. The solutions are then carefully annotated in the second half of the book.

The material is well-selected and covers everything from the relatively straightforward to the very complex.

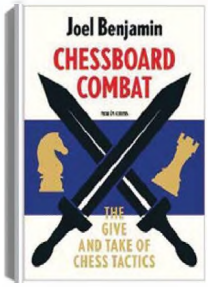
As has become the standard, each puzzle has a QR code accompanying it. When using it, it will take you to an unannotated, abbreviated version of the solution. It seems a little gimmicky, and I don't entirely love it, but Mueller apparently does because he has used it in all of his recent books from JBV Chess Books.

If you are entering the Open Sicilian as White but feel that your tactical radar is still not up to where you would like it to be, then this book can definitely get you quite a bit further, particularly when studying the annotated solutions. A very solid and interesting book.

04 Chessboard Combat – The Give And Take of Chess Tactics

by Joel Benjamin

$27.95 (paperback)



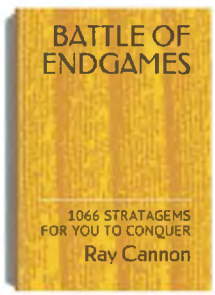
In the introduction to this new book, former 3-time U.S. Champion and Grandmaster Joel Benjamin confesses his love for Horowitz & Reinfeld's classic *Chess Traps, Pitfalls, and Swindles* and tells the reader that he hopes to capture some of that fun and enjoyment he found in that volume. The book is split up into nine chapters, each with a separate theme; for instance, chapter 1 is "Strike, Counterstrike". The chapter opens with a selection of puzzles, where you are given the names of the players and what the demand is, e.g., Black wins. Next follows a section of annotated games, some of which contain the solutions to the puzzles at the front, while others are there to delve further into the topic of the chapter.

In total, there are 129 annotated games, and frankly, it is pure joy to work your way through the material. So many brilliant games, stunning moves, missed resources, blunders, attacks, counterattacks, and everything else that falls under the topic of tactics. It is truly a joyous read.

05 Battles of Endgames – 1066 Stratagems for You to Conquer

by Ray Cannon

$14.99 (paperback)



This book is admittedly a couple of years old, first published in 2021, but an editor sent it for me to check out, and I found myself entertained and intrigued.

Ray Cannon is an English chess player, and that's about all I know about him, other than that he occasionally frequents tournaments in and around London.

The book is self-published via Amazon and has an absolutely hideous cover, which is one of the ones available to you via the Amazon cover generator, and the text on the back cover is difficult, if not nearly impossible, to read, in part because of the microscopic size and the poor choice of font.

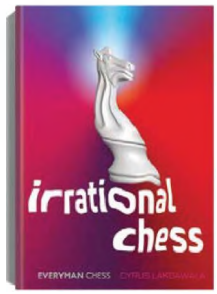
Thankfully, this is where the bad news ends because the material inside the book is quite excellent. It has 1066 puzzle positions of varying degrees of difficulty; some are rather straightforward, and others deviously difficult. The solutions are lightly annotated, but they suffice to make them much more interesting than just offering the moves by themselves.

For improvers, these puzzles will bring countless hours of fun and instruction. The book is very inexpensive (at the time of writing, it was even offered at the bargain price of $10.29, which is almost too cheap), so check it out.

06 Irrational Chess

by Cyrus Lakdawala

$29.95 (paperback)



We chess players like to put things into neat little boxes of classification, openings, tactics, endgames, positional play, etc. But quite frequently, and in recent years much more frequently, chess seems to have moved in a different, more fluid direction, where those lovely boxes don't suffice to explain what is going on at the board. And not only that, most books have failed to cover this topic that is becoming more and more prevalent not only in top-flight chess games but also among mere mortals like you and me. This inspired Californian International Master, and my occasional co-author, Cyrus Lakdawala, to dive into this complex topic and sort out how to define this form of chess that he has labeled "Irrational Chess," which seems fitting for the madness that frequently ensues in the 88 games, some familiar, some completely unknown, he has chosen for this volume.

The material has been divided into eight sizeable chapters, and the book clocks in at a relatively modest, for Lakdawala, that is, 400 pages. The material is presented in Lakdawala's trademark style with lots of test questions, tactical puzzles, verbose and

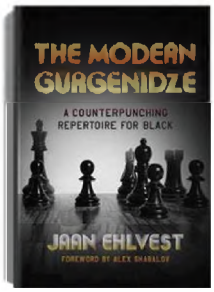
not-so-verbose explanations of the themes covered along with lots of lessons for those of us, which includes yours truly, who need someone to take us by the hand while guiding us through this jungle of madness that irrational chess represents.

Another great book by one of, if not the most productive (certainly in terms of page count) authors in history. I wonder if we one day will see Lakdawala in the US Chess Hall of Fame.

07 The Modern Gurgenidze – A Counterpunching Repertoire for Black

by Jaan Ehlvest

$24.95 (paperback)



The author of this opening book should be a familiar name for chess fans. Originally hailing from his native Estonia, GM Jaan Ehlvest shot to the top of the chess world in the late 1980s and early 1990s, being part of the gold medal-winning Soviet team at the 1988 Chess Olympiad, and joined the top 10 highest-rated players in the world in 1990. He ranked in the top-100 in the world for almost another two decades, including after moving to the U.S. in 2006.

He has written a couple of other books, but this is the first for Russell Enterprises and the choice of topic is a good one: The Modern Gurgenidze has, as far as I'm aware, never been previously covered in a single-standing volume. The Modern Gurgenidze is sort of a hybrid between the Fianchetto Opening and the Caro-Kann, with many possible move orders available to Black, but the most common is 1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♗g7 3.♘c3 c6 4.♘f3 (or 4.f4) d5, and the battle ensues. It is solid, it is flexible, it is combative, and it is not widely well-known, which is a distinct advantage for those who like to give their opponents an opportunity to think for themselves right from the start of the game.

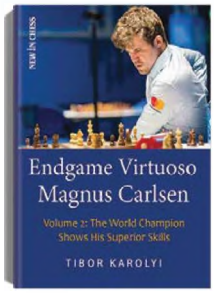
The material is split up into 10 chapters, featuring a total of 31 sample games (albeit with many, many more cited in the notes), including several of Ehlvest's own. It is thoroughly researched and computer-checked, and as far as I can see from the sample lines I checked, it seems to hold up very well, even if your opponent remembers and plays the opening like a computer.

A very good opening book, probably mostly aimed at those rated above 1700.

08 Endgame Virtuoso Magnus Carlsen – Vol 2: The World Champion Shows His Superior Skills

by Tibor Karolyi

$24.95 (paperback)



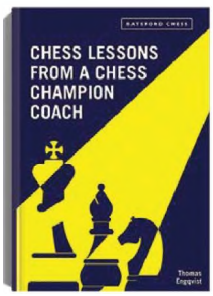
Magnus Carlsen may no longer be the World Champion, but he is, by some margin, still the strongest player in this galaxy, and he definitely was the world champion during the period that the games in this book were played. The present volume picks up where Volume 1 ended, and thus, the years 2018–2022.

A total of 104 partial games, obviously with an exclusive emphasis on the endgames, are thoroughly annotated by the author, Hungarian International Master, and esteemed author Tibor Karolyi. For serious players who want to improve their endgame play and understanding, not just hardcore technique, this book provides a treasure trove of instructional examples and is highly recommended.

09 Chess Lessons From a Champion Coach

by Thomas Engqvist

$25.00 (paperback)



I'm beginning to feel that Batsford's publishing program for chess books boils down to how fast Andrew Soltis and Swedish International Master Thomas Engqvist can write books. Previously, Engqvist has penned the very good and popular "300 Most Important..." series for them, and this book seems to be the first departure from that concept.

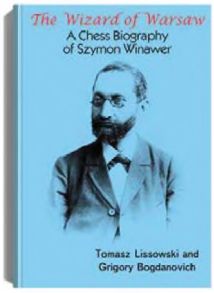
Each chapter covers a different player, each a significant name in chess history, starting with Ruy Lopez and ending with Magnus Carlsen. The chapters vary in length and depth; some are brief, covering the player's contribution to chess and their place in chess history along with a game, and some cover more game material. Across the 30 chapters, there are a total of sixty games, all carefully annotated, mostly of the verbal variety with an emphasis on providing understanding to the reader.

Therefore the material is mostly aimed at those rated below 1600–1800, but the rest of us can also enjoy the material and games.

10 The Wizard of Warsaw – A Chess Biography of Szymon Winawer

by Tomasz Lissowski and Grigory Bogdanovich

$30.00 (paperback)
$40.00 (hardback)



Many have heard of the Winawer variation in the French Defense, but that is as far as our knowledge goes when it comes to the name of Winawer.

Polish chess historian *par excellence* Tomasz Lissowski and International Master Grigory Bogdanovich (with whom you should be acquainted from the book on Spielmann above) intends to change that perspective. Over the course of two parts, 29 chapters and 132 games (complete and partial), they cover his life, his career, his contributions, and, of course, his games.

The book is well-written and well-illustrated, and many of the games are carefully annotated. Winawer is not as well-known as many of his contemporaries from the second half of the 19th century, but thanks to this wonderful volume, we are about to learn a lot more.

U.S. TOURNAMENTS

WASHINGTON, DC
March 31-April 2, 2023
National High School (K-12) Championship (7 rounds)

1-2 Jason WANG, Sharvesh DEVIPRASATH 6½
3-9 Arthur GUO, Nico CHASIN, Maximillian LU. Nicolas DE LA COLINA, Jean CRUZ, Advaith KARTHIK, Iris MOU 6

ROUND ROCK, TX
April 21-23, 2023
National Middle School (K-8) Championship (7 rounds)

1 Eric LIU 7
2 Vaseegaran NANDHAKUMAR 6½
3-10 Brewington HARDAWAY, Ronen WILSON, Julian COLVILLE, Nikash VEMPARALA, Lucius MELILLO, Elbert FANG, Bobby QIAN, Anjaneya RAO 5½

BALTIMORE, MD
May 12-14, 2023
National Elementary (K-6) Championship (7 rounds)

1 Nathan YAN 6½
2-3 Rohan RAJARAM, Benjamin AMRANY 6
4-7 Oscar WILLIAMS, Kyle ZHUANG, Alexander SUKHIASHVILI, Lucas CHEN ... 5½

NAPERVILLE, IL
March 29-April 2, 2023
Elite Chess Arthur Bisguier Memorial IM Norm Invitational (10-player round-robin)

1 Ryan AMBURGY 7
2-3 Nikola MITKOV (MKD), Liordis VERA (CUB) 5½
4-7 Vishnuvardhan ARJUN (IND), Seth HOMA, Jonathan KOGEN, Roberto DEL CAMPO (MEX) ... 4½
8 Alexandre KRETCHETOV (RUS) 3½
9 Joshua COLAS 3
10 Aidan CAREY 2½

Congrats to FM Ryan Amburgy on scoring his second IM-Norm! 7/9 is never an easy score to make, and getting off to a quick start is important.

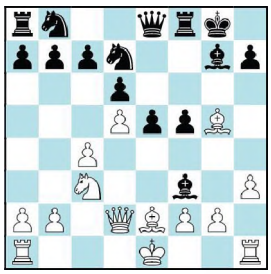
A four-game winning streak starting in the second round proved more than enough. Ryan walks us through his important win against IM Roberto Del Campo below.

E91

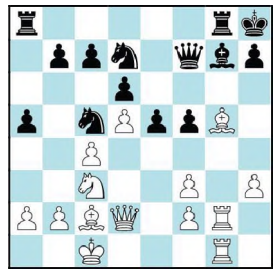
Ryan Amburgy	2242
Roberto Del Campo	2215

Arthur Bisguier Memorial, Naperville 2023
Notes by Ryan Amburgy

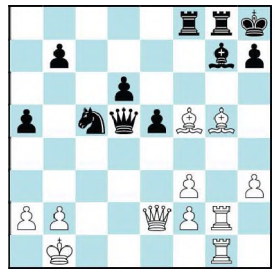
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 d6 3.♘f3 g6 4.♘c3 ♗g7 5.e4 0-0 6.♗e2 ♗g4 7.♗e3 ♘fd7 8.♕d2 e5 9.d5 f5 10.exf5 gxf5 11.♗g5 ♕e8 12.h3 ♗xf3



13.gxf3! This was all theory. 13.♗xf3? leaves the g-file closed and gives White no advantage.
13...♔h8!?N 13...f4 had been played in three other games, with the intent to take advantage of the misplaced bishop on g5. White can deal with this by 14.♖g1 ♔h8 15.0-0-0 a5 16.♖g4 ♘c5 17.♖dg1, and White had a huge advantage in R.Buhmann 2614 - B.Zueger 2425, Plovdiv 2012. The bishop on g5 being stuck doesn't matter, and Black has no counterplay. White will continue with ♗d1-c2 and exert significant pressure on the kingside.
14.0-0-0 ♕f7 15.♖dg1 a5 16.♖g2 Methodically building up pressure on the kingside. White has a clear edge, though Black certainly has chances to fight back. *-Rorrer*
16...♘a6 17.♖hg1 ♖g8 18.♗d3 ♘ac5 19.♗c2



19...♘b6 19...e4!? was an interesting pawn sacrifice. Even so, after 20.fxe4 ♘e5 21.♗h6 ♗xh6 22.♕xh6 ♖xg2 23.♖xg2 f4 24.♘b5 Black might have very powerful knights, but White has an extra pawn alongside a quite active position.
20.♕e2 c6 21.♔b1 cxd5?! This just helps me. 21...e4!? 22.fxe4 f4± is another positional pawn sacrifice that gives Black decent chances. He will play ...♗e5 with reasonable control. White is, of course, still better, but Black keeps the fight going.
22.cxd5 ♘xd5 23.♘xd5 ♕xd5 24.♗xf5 ♖af8



By FM Grayson Rorrer, Features Editor

ACM would like to invite tournament organizers and players to submit announcements, results and games to be featured in Tournament Reviews section.

Send your submissions to **office@acmchess.com** or visit **www.acmchess.com/submit**.

Please refer in the subject line to our Features Editor, **FM Grayson Rorrer.**

SOLUTIONS TO THREATS EXERCISES FROM PAGE 73

1 **15...d5!!** A counterthreat!
16.♗xd5 ♘xd5 17.♕xd5 ♗xc2+!!
18.♔c1 18.♔xc2?? ♘b4+-+
18...♗xd1 and **Black won**.

2 White's rook is under attack but he responds with an even stronger counterthreat!
45.♖xb6! axb6 46.a7! ♖xa7 46...♖c8 47.♘c6+! ♔d7 48.♘b8++-
47.♘c6+ and **White won.**

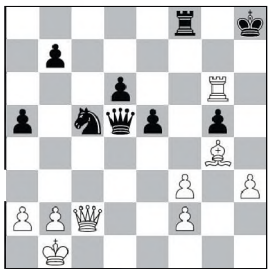
3 **22...♖b3!** A counterthreat!
23.♕c2 23.♗d1 ♖xc3 24.♗xa4 ♖xc1 25.♖xc1 ♘f3+! 26.gxf3 ♖xe3-+
23...♘xc4!! 24.♗d1 24.♗xc4 ♗xc4 25.♕xc4 ♕xc4 26.♖xc4 ♖bxe3-+
24...♖bxe3 White resigned.

4 With his last move 30.♘b6? Anand has just forked two black rooks. However...
30...♖xb4+ 31.♔a3 ♖xc2!! A counterthreat!
32.♖xc2 32.♔xb4 ♖xd2-+
32...♖b3+ 33.♔a2 ♖e3+ Black is now two pawns up and later **won.**

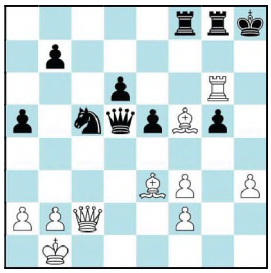
5 White has just played 42.♖c7, attacking the black queen.
42...♘xf3!! A counterthreat!
43.♖xh7 43.♔xf3 is met by 43...♕h5 mate. Or 43.gxf3 ♕h2+ 44.♔d1 g2-+.
43...♘d4+ 44.♔e1 ♘xb3 45.♖xb7 ♘xa5 and **Black won**.

6 White has just threatened his opponent's queen.
37...♘d3!! But now Black missed an opportunity to make a counterthreat and played 37...♘b3, which allowed White to escape with 38.♕xc2.
38.♖xd2 38.♕a1 would be refuted by 38...♕xe2! 39.♖xe2 c1♕+ winning. Or, if 38.♕xc2, then 38...♕xc2 39.♖xc2 ♘xe1 is decisive.
38...cxd2 39.♕xd2 ♘xe1 and **Black won.**

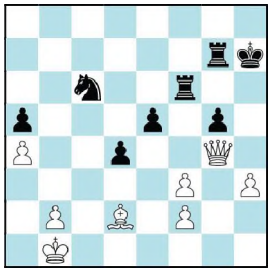
25.♕c2! The key move, holding everything together.
25...h6 26.♗e3 ♗f6 27.♖g6? I didn't spend enough time here to find the best way to finish the game. Most precise was 27.♗xh6, when after 27...♖xg2 28.♖xg2 ♖g8 29.♗g6!, White has an extra pawn and Black has zero counterplay.
27...♗g5? 27...♖xg6!? was necessary. Then, after 28.♖xg6 ♗g5 (In case of *28...♗g7*, my intention was *29.♗e4 ♘xe4 30.fxe4*. Black will not survive this endgame with such a bad bishop and weak pawns.) 29.♗xg5 hxg5 30.♗g4



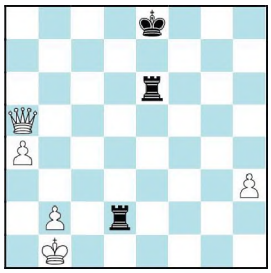
A) 30...♕d3?! 31.♕xd3 ♘xd3 32.♖xd6 ♘xf2 33.♖d5 is another endgame that White will slowly win.
B) 30...e4! is a try I missed during the game. After, for example, 31.♕c3+ ♕e5 32.♕xe5+ dxe5 33.♖xg5 ♖e8, Black is close to holding this endgame. Objectively, though, White is still in great shape.
28.♖1xg5 hxg5



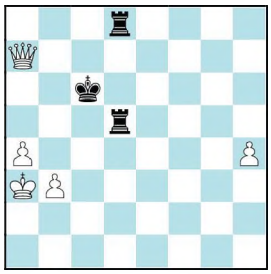
29.♗e6! A decisive shot.
29...♕xe6 29...♕d3 30.♕xd3 ♘xd3 31.♗xg8 ♖xg8 32.♖xd6 is another clearly winning endgame for White.
30.♖xe6 ♘xe6 31.♕b3 I knew it would be impossible to hold all of his weaknesses, especially with his low time.
31...♘d8 32.♕b6 ♖f6 33.a4 ♘c6 34.♕xb7 d5 35.♕c7 d4 36.♗d2 ♖g7 37.♕c8+ ♔h7 38.♕g4



38...♖gf7?! He sacrifices g5, not finding a better plan. Waiting with 38...♖fg6 makes it harder for White to come up with a plan, since Black is holding all of his weaknesses.
39.♗xg5 ♖d6 The f3 pawn cannot be taken, since after 39...♖xf3 40.♕h5+ ♔g8 41.♕g6+ ♖g7 42.♕xc6+-, the rook on f3 is under attack, which proves to be crucial.
40.♕e4+ ♔g7 41.f4 d3 42.fxe5 d2 43.♗xd2 ♖xd2 44.♕g2+ ♔f8 45.♕xc6 ♖fxf2 46.♕b7 ♖fe2 47.e6 ♖xe6 48.♕b8+ ♔e7 49.♕c7+ ♔e8 50.♕xa5



This endgame is probably a draw if you remove the h–pawn, but it is alive here and Black cannot hold pawn endgames or properly coordinate his rooks.
50...♖ed6 51.♔a2 ♔d7 52.♕b5+ ♔c7 53.h4 ♖2d5 54.♕c4+ ♔b6 55.♔a3 ♖d4 56.♕b5+ ♔a7 57.♕c5+ ♔a6 58.b3 ♖4d5 59.♕c8+ ♔b6 60.♕e8 ♖d8 61.♕e3+ ♔c7 62.♕a7+ ♔c6



63.a5 ♖b5 64.♕a6+ ♔c5 65.b4+! ♖xb4 66.♕a7+ Black resigned, as I win one of his rooks.

MONROVIA, CA
April 1-5, 2023
Los Angeles IM Norm Invitational (10-player Scheveningen, double round-robin)

1 Nikola RADOVANOVIC (SRB) 8
2-3 Varun KRISHNAN, Tommy WEN 6½
4 Teddie WEN 6
5 Branimir JUKIC (CRO) 5
6 Nenad DORIC (CRO) 4½
7 Domen KRUMPACNIK (SLO) 4
8-9 Derek WU, Mike ZALOZNYY 3½
10 Milan MRDJA (CRO) 2

SAINT LOUIS, MO April 5-13, 2023 Spring Chess Classic A

Rk	Name	FED	Elo	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Pts	TPR
1	Benjamin BOK	NED	2607	•	½	1	½	1	½	½	½	0	½	5	2668
2	Benjamin GLEDURA	HUN	2644	½	•	½	1	½	0	½	1	½	½	5	2664
3	Samuel SEVIAN	USA	2684	0	½	•	½	1	½	½	0	1	1	5	2659
4	Dariusz SWIERCZ	USA	2637	½	0	½	•	½	½	½	1	1	½	5	2664
5	Yasser QUESADA	CUB	2601	0	½	0	½	•	1	½	1	½	1	5	2668
6	Christopher YOO	USA	2607	½	1	½	½	0	•	½	½	½	½	4½	2625
7	Illia NYZHNYK	UKR	2644	½	½	½	½	½	½	•	½	½	½	4½	2621
8	Nodirbek YAKUBBOEV	UZB	2630	½	0	1	0	0	½	½	•	1	½	4	2579
9	Daniel DARDHA	BEL	2625	1	½	0	0	½	½	½	0	•	½	3½	2543
10	Abhimanyu MISHRA	USA	2550	½	½	0	½	0	½	½	½	½	•	3½	2551

SAINT LOUIS, MO April 5-13, 2023 Spring Chess Classic B

Rk	Name	FED	Elo	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Pts	TPR
1	Felix BLOHBERGER	AUT	2501	•	½	1	½	1	½	1	1	½	½	6½	2667
2	Dambasuren BATSUREN	MGL	2525	½	•	0	½	0	1	½	1	1	½	5	2542
3	Luka BUDISAVLJEVIC	SRB	2488	0	1	•	½	1	½	½	½	0	1	5	2546
4	Jason LIANG	USA	2530	½	½	½	•	0	½	½	1	½	1	5	2541
5	Victor MIKHALEVSKI	ISR	2515	0	1	0	1	•	1	0	0	1	½	4½	2500
6	Gleb DUDIN	FID	2475	½	0	½	½	0	•	1	½	½	1	4½	2504
7	Akshat CHANDRA	USA	2468	0	½	½	½	1	0	•	½	1	½	4½	2505
8	Gergely KANTOR	HUN	2532	0	0	½	0	1	½	½	•	½	1	4	2455
9	Balaji DAGGUPATI	USA	2505	½	0	1	½	0	½	0	½	•	½	3½	2421
10	Kirk GHAZARIAN	USA	2475	½	½	0	0	½	0	½	0	½	•	2½	2338

LEDYARD, CT
April 5-9, 2023
15th Annual Foxwoods Open (9 rounds)

1-2 Jianchao ZHOU (CHN), Bartlomiej MACIEJA (POL) 7
3-5 Joel BENJAMIN, Jakub FUS (POL), Olivier CHIKU-RATTE (CAN) 6½
6-11 Eric LAWSON (CAN), Danila POLIANNIKOV, Sergio GERMAN (ARG), Sila CAGLAR (TUR), Arvind JAYARAMAN (IND), Qi PANG ... 6

NEW YORK CITY, NY
April 5-9, 2023
NYC Spring Chess Norms GM-A (12-player Schiller)

1 Nico CHASIN 6½
2 Robby KEVLISHVILI (NED) .. 6
3-4 Tamaz GELASHVILI (GEO), Fidel CORRALES 5½
5 Evan PARK 5
6-7 Kassa KORLEY (DEN), Andy WOODWARD 4½
8 Josiah STEARMAN 4
9-10 Aleksandr OSTROVSKIY, Anthony ATANASOV (CAN) 3½
11 Sai KRISHNA (IND) 3
12 Edward SONG 2½

NEW YORK CITY, NY
April 5-9, 2023
NYC Spring Chess Norms IM-B (12-player Schiller)

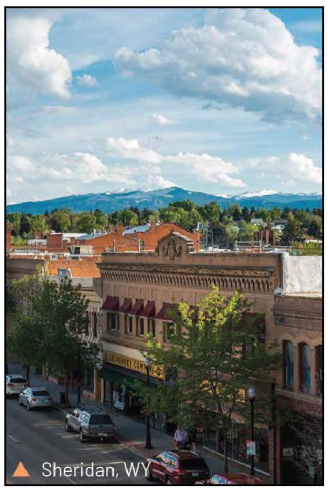
1 Mark PARAGUA (PHI) 7
2 Terry LUO 6
3 Oliver BARBOSA (PHI) 6
4-7 Mykola BORTNYK (UKR), Grant XU, Hoshua COLAS, Erick ZHAO 5
8 Alice LEE 4½
9 Aiden REISS 4
10 Zachary TANENBAUM 3
11 Andreea NAVROTESCU (FRA) 2½
12 Mariia BORTNYK (UKR) 1½

NEW YORK CITY, NY
April 5-9, 2023
NYC Spring Chess Norms IM-C (10-player round-robin)

1 Jacek STOPA (POL) 7
2 Tejas RAMA 6
3 Pedro FRAGA (CUB) 5½
4 Justin LEE 5
5-6 Liordis VERA (CUB), Iris MOU 4½
7-8 Eric LIU, Nathaniel MOOR 3½
9 Jalen WANG 3
10 Andrea LA MANNA (ITA) 2½

SHERIDAN, WY
May 5-7, 2023
Second Sheridan WY FIDE Open (5 rounds)

1 Fidel CORRALES 5
2-4 Alexander FISHBEIN, Sullivan MCCONNELL, Gary WARMERDAM 4
5-6 Griffin MCCONNELL, Tarquin BENNION 3½


Sheridan, WY

TOURNAMENTS ABROAD

CHONGQING,
CHINA March 28-April 3, 2023 FIDE Women's Candidates Final

Name	FED	Elo	1	2	3	4	5	6	Pts	TPR
Tingjie LEI	CHN	2545	0	1	½	1	1	.	3½	2675
Zhongyi TAN	CHN	2526	1	0	½	0	0	.	1½	2396

NEW DELHI, INDIA March 24-April 6, 2023 FIDE Women's Grand Prix

Rk	Name	FED	Rtg	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Pts	TPR
1	A. GORYACHKINA	FID	2576	•	1	½	½	½	½	1	1	½	½	+	7	2626
2	B. ASSAUBAYEVA	KAZ	2440	0	•	½	½	1	½	1	1	½	1	+	7	2641
3	Jiner ZHU	CHN	2489	½	½	•	1	½	1	½	½	½	1	+	7	2635
4	Kateryna LAGNO	FID	2560	½	½	0	•	½	½	½	½	1	1	+	6	2546
5	Polina SHUVALOVA	FID	2484	½	0	½	½	•	½	0	1	1	1	+	6	2554
6	Humpy KONERU	IND	2576	½	½	0	½	½	•	½	½	1	½	+	5½	2501
7	Nino BATSIASHVILI	GEO	2489	0	0	½	½	1	½	•	0	½	½	+	4½	2430
8	Dronavalli HARIKA	IND	2511	0	0	½	½	0	½	1	•	½	½	+	4½	2428
9	Nana DZAGNIDZE	GEO	2525	½	½	½	0	0	0	½	½	•	1	+	4½	2426
10	R. VAISHALI	IND	2433	½	0	0	0	0	½	½	½	0	•	+	3	2297
11	Elisabeth PAEHTZ	GER	2474	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	•	0	-

REYKJAVIK, ICELAND
March 29-April 4, 2023
Reykjavik Open (9 rounds)

1 Nils GRANDELIUS (SWE) 7½
2-8 Mustafa YILMAZ (TUR), Abhijeet GUPTA (IND), Maxime LAGARDE (FRA), Gabor PAPP (HUN), Matthieu CORNETTE (FRA), Tamas BANUSZ (HUN), Leon LIVAIC (CRO) 7
9-15 Vasyl IVANCHUK (UKR), V. PRANAV (IND), Emre CAN (TUR), Sidhant MOHAPATRA (IND), Sebastien MAZE (FRA), Quentin LOISEAU (FRA), Bala Chandra DHULIPALLA (IND) 6½

FAGERNES, NORWAY
April 2-9, 2023
Fagernes International (9 rounds)

1-2 Vahap SANAL (TUR), Abhimanyu PURANIK (IND) 7½
3 Samvel TER-SAHAKYAN (ARM) 7
4-5 Eduardas ROZENTALIS (LTU), S.P. SETHURAMAN (IND) 6½
6-13 Tor KAASEN (NOR), Chatterjee KOUSTAV (IND), Mittal ADITYA (IND), Erik BLOMQVIST (SWE), Elham ABDRLAUF (NOR), Benny AIZENBERG (ISR), Emin OHANYAN (ARM), Kaido KULAOTS (EST) 6

MEXICO CITY, MEXICO
April 4-9, 2023
68th Mexican Open (9 rounds)

1 Jose MARTINEZ (PER) 8
2-3 Sandro MARECO (ARG), Luis CHIMI (MEX) 7½
4-5 Lazaro BRUZON, Holden HENANDEZ 7
6-13 Emilio CORDOVA (PER), Sion MEDINA (MEX), Abel GONZALEZ (CUB), Ermes VELOZ (CUB), Kevin QUISPE (PER), Nikola MITKOV (MKD), Alexey CARDOSO (CUB), David NIETO (ESP) 6½

LA RODA, SPAIN
April 5-9, 2023
49th La Roda Open (9 rounds)

1-2 Alexandr FIER (BRA), Chithambaram ARAVINDH (IND) 7½
3-9 V. PRANAV (IND), P. INIYAN (IND), S.L. NARAYANAN (IND), Carlos CABRARE (CUB), Li DI (CHN), Frederik SVANE (GER), Antonio SANTOS (POR) 7
10-15 N.R. VIGNESH (IND), Yuanhe ZHAO (CHN), Rinat JUMABAYEV (KAZ), Ori KOBO (ISR), Xiangyu XU (CHN), Martin ROCAMORA (ESP) 6½

LA NUCIA, SPAIN
April 5-10, 2023
7th Semana Santa Open (9 rounds)

1-7 Yuri SOLODOVNICHENKO (UKR), Yi XU (CHN), Maksim CHIGAEV (FID), Leon MENDONCA (IND), Alex OUTON (ESP), Marc`Andria MAURIZZI (FRA), Julen MARTINEZ (ESP) 7½
8-15 Francisco GUARDIOLA (ESP), Evgeny POSTNY (ISR), Angel ARANDA (ESP), Omar QUINTANA (CUB), Jules MOUSSARD (FRA), Brandon JACOBSON, Marcos COLLADOS (ESP), Tomas SOSA (ARG) 7

CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA
April 6-10, 2023
Doeberl Cup (9 rounds)

1 Hrant MELKUMYAN (ARM) ... 8
2 Temur KUYBOKAROV (AUS)... 7½
3-6 James MORRIS (AUS), Rishi SARDANA (AUS), Daniel FERNANDEZ (ENG), Frederik LITCHFIELD (AUS) 6½
7-12 Stephen SOLOMON (AUS), Samy SHOKER (EGY), Ari DALE (AUS), Albert WINKELMAN (AUS), David CANNON (AUS), Matthew CLARKE (AUS) 6

CIUTADELLA DE MENORCA, SPAIN
April 11-16, 2023
Menorca Open (9 rounds)

1-10 D. GUKESH (IND), V. PRANAV (IND), Jorden VAN FOREEST (NED), Chopra ARYAN (IND), Vladimir FEDOSEEV (FID), Hans NIEMANN, Ori KOBO (ISR), Maksim CHIGAEV (FID), Xiangyu XU (CHN), Chatterjee KOUSTAV (IND) 7
11-12 Bharathakoti HARSHA (IND), Yahil SOKOLOVSKY (ISR) 6½

SANT FERRAN DE SES ROQUES, SPAIN
April 18-28, 2023
Sunway Formentera Open (10 rounds)

1-4 Vladimir FEDOSEEV (FID), Venkataraman KARTHIK (IND), V. PRANAV (IND), Leon MENDONCA (IND) 7
5-9 Vuppala PRRANEETH (IND), Chithambaram ARAVINDH (IND), Chopra ARYAN (IND), Brandon JACOBSON, Daniel LEAL (ESP) 6½
10-15 Daniel DARDHA (BEL), Di LI (CHN), Yi XU (CHN), Vitaliy BERNADSKIY (UKR), Peng CHEN (CHN), Mittal ADITYA (IND) 6

ASTANA, KAZAKHSTAN
April 23-30, 2023
Kazakhstan Chess Cup (9 rounds)

1-2 Aldiyar ANSAT (KAZ), Shant SARGSYAN (ARM) 7½
3-8 Alexander MOISEENKO (UKR), Aleksey GOGANOV (FID), Bardiya DANESHVAR (IRI), Hans

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES FROM PAGE 49

1 **1.♕f7** If 1...♗f8 2.♗d5. **1–0**

2 **1.dxe6 ♘xg3 2.exf7+ ♔h8 3.♖xd8 ♖xd8 4.♘g6+ hxg6 5.f8♕+ ♖xf8 6.♖xf8+ ♔h7 7.hxg3 1-0**

3 **1.♗xe6 ♕xc1+ 2.♔e2 ♕xh1 3.♗xf7+ ♔d8 4.♕xb7 ♕c1 5.♕xa8 ♕xb2+ 6.♘bd2 ♘e4 7.♕xe4 ♕xa1 8.♕d5+ ♔c7 9.♕c5+ ♔d8 10.♗e6 1-0**

4 **1.♗xc4 ♖f8** 1...♗xc4 2.♖e8+ **2.h5 ♗d7** 2...♗xc4 3.♖e8 ♖d8 4.♕xf8 mate.
3.♗xf7+ 1-0

5 Historic Tragedy! Adams played 1.♗xh7+ and resigned shortly. He had a forced mate with: **1.♖xg7+ ♔f8 2.♖g8+ ♔xg8 3.♖g1+ ♔f8 4.♗g7+ ♔g8 5.♗f6+ ♔f8 6.♖g8+ ♔xg8 7.♕g2+ ♔f8 8.♕g7 mate.**

6 **1.♘xe6 ♕xe6 2.♗xf5 ♕e7 3.♗xd7 ♕xd7 4.b5 ♘d8 5.f5 ♕h7 6.e6 axb2 7.♕xb2 h5 8.♕e2 h4 9.e7 ♖e8 10.♕e5+ ♕g7 11.f6 ♕f7 12.♘f5 1-0**

7 **1.♘xe7! ♕b8** 1...♔xe7 2.♕h4+ g5 3.♗c5+ ♘xc5 4.♕xg5+ ♔e8 5.♕h5+ ♔e7 6.♕f7 mate.

2.♘xc6 bxc6 3.♘d6+ Black resigned to the obvious. **1-0**

8 An amazing save! **1.♖h1!! ♘xh1 2.♖xh1 ♕xh1 3.♕g5 ♕xg2+ 4.♔c3 ♖xe7 5.♕xe7+ ♖f7 6.♕xe6 ♔g7 7.♗c4 ♖f6** and the draw is now forced: **8.♕g8+ ♔h6 9.♕h8+ ♔g5 10.♕g7+ ♖g6 11.♕e7+ ♔h6 12.♕f8+ ♖g7 13.♕f6+ ♖g6 14.♕f8+** ½-½

9 **1.♘g6 1–0**

JERMUK, ARMENIA May 2-12, 2023 Stepan Avagyan Memorial

Rk	Name	FED	Elo	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Pts	TPR
1	Samuel SEVIAN	USA	2684	•	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	1	1	6	2755
2	Nodirbek YAKUBBOEV	UZB	2630	½	•	0	½	1	½	½	1	½	½	5	2679
3	M. Amin TABATABAEI	IRI	2677	½	1	•	½	½	0	½	½	½	1	5	2674
4	Haik MARTIROSYAN	ARM	2675	½	½	½	•	½	½	½	½	½	1	5	2674
5	Robert HOVHANNISYAN	ARM	2596	½	0	½	½	•	½	1	½	½	1	5	2683
6	Andrey ESIPENKO	FID	2679	0	½	1	½	½	•	½	½	½	½	4½	2631
7	Frederik SVANE	GER	2600	½	½	½	½	0	½	•	1	½	0	4	2597
8	S.L. NARAYANAN	IND	2661	½	0	½	½	½	0	•	½	1	1	4	2590
9	Thai Dai Van NGUYEN	CZE	2649	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	•	0	3½	2554
10	Artur DAVTYAN	ARM	2506	0	½	0	0	0	½	1	0	1	•	3	2525

HAVANA, CUBA May 3-12, 2023 56th Capablanca Memorial - Elite

Rk	Name	FED	ELO	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Pts.	TPR
1	Jonas BJERRE	DEN	2602	•	½	1	1	½	½	1	1	½	1	7	2796
2	Alexandr FIER	BRA	2589	½	•	1	½	1	1	1	½	½	½	6½	2744
3	Luis QUESADA PEREZ	CUB	2559	0	0	•	½	1	1	½	½	1	1	5½	2661
4	Rasmus SVANE	GER	2623	0	½	½	•	½	½	½	½	½	1	4½	2574
5	Eduardo ITURRIZAGA	ESP	2637	½	0	0	½	•	½	½	1	1	½	4½	2572
6	Raunak SADHWANI	IND	2627	½	0	0	½	½	•	½	1	1	½	4½	2573
7	Carlos CABRERA	CUB	2586	0	0	½	½	½	½	•	1	½	1	4½	2578
8	Omar QUINTANA	CUB	2528	0	½	½	½	0	0	0	•	1	½	3	2459
9	Lelys DUANY	CUB	2521	½	½	0	½	0	0	½	0	•	½	2½	2419
10	Elier MIRANDA MESA	CUB	2516	0	½	0	0	½	½	0	½	½	•	2½	2420

MALMO, SWEDEN May 4-10, 2023 Tepe Sigeman & Co Chess Tournament

Rk	Name	FED	Elo	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Pts	TPR
1	Peter SVIDLER	FID	2683	•	½	½	½	½	1	1	½	4½	2773
2	Abhimanyu MISHRA	USA	2550	½	•	½	½	1	½	0	1	4	2740
3	Nils GRANDELIUS	SWE	2660	½	½	•	½	½	1	½	½	4	2725
4	D. GUKESH	IND	2730	½	½	½	•	1	0	½	1	4	2715
5	Jorden VAN FOREEST	NED	2680	½	0	½	0	•	1	1	½	3½	2672
6	Arjun ERIGAISI	IND	2701	0	½	0	1	0	•	1	½	3	2619
7	Boris GELFAND	ISR	2678	0	1	½	½	0	0	•	½	2½	2570
8	Vincent KEYMER	GER	2700	½	0	½	0	½	½	½	•	2½	2567

NIEMANN. Bugar RASULOV (AZE), Mihail NIKITENKO (FID) 7
9-15 Tamir NABATY (IRS), Vladislav KOVALEV (FID), Arystan ISANZHULOV (KAZ), Samvel TER-SAHAKYAN (ARM), Timur GAREYEV, S.P. SETHURAMAN (IND), Nikita MATINIAN (FID) ... 6½

BUDAPEST, HUNGARY
April 25-May 4, 2023
Vezerkepzo April GM-Norm Invitational (10-player round-robin)

1 Andy WOODWARD 7
2 Kaido KULAOTS (EST) 6½
3-4 Cyrus LOW (SGP), Valeriy NEVEROV (UKR) 5½
5 Gergely ACZEL (HUN) 5
6 Marco MATERIA (FRA) 4½
7-8 Chethan ARHAN (IND), Karthikeyan AJAY (IND) 4
9 Andrew KAYONDE (ZAM) 2½
10 Nitin KSHATRIYA (IND) ..... ½

BUDAPEST, HUNGARY
April 25-May 4, 2023
Vezerkepzo April IM-Norm Invitational (10-player round-robin)

1-2 Matias SHUNDI, Nhat TO (HUN) 6½
3-5 Sandor FARAGO (HUN), Jakub PULPAN (CZE), Miklos HALAK (HUN) 5
6-7 Isha SHARMA (IND), Felix XIE (NZL) 4½
8 A.P. JOSHUA (IND) 3
9-10 Laszlo TAKACS (SVK), Nitin VEDANT (IND) 2

RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL
May 2-7, 2023
Rio Chess Open (9 rounds)

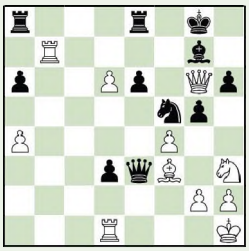
1 Luis SUPI (BRA) 7½
2-6 Simon LANGUIDEY (ARG), Evandro BARBOSA (BRA), Jose CUBAS (PAR), Yago SANTIAGO (BRA), Nathan FILGUEIRAS (BRA) 7
7-10 Jose GEMY (BOL), Edgar RODRIGUES (BRA), Luis RODI (URU), Darcy LIMA (BRA) 6½

BAKU, AZERBAIJAN
May 3-13, 2023
Baku Open (9 rounds)

1-3 Leon MENDONCA (IND), Aleksandar INDJIC (SRB), Vladislav KOVALEV (FID) 7
4-5 S.P. SETHURAMAN (IND), Mahammad MURADLI (AZE) ... 6½
6-15 Vuppala PRRANEETH (IND), Mittal ADITYA (IND), Aydin SULEYMANLI (AZE), Kazybek NOGERBEK (KAZ), Nijat ABASOV (AZE), Ahmad AHMADZADA (AZE), Tornike SANIKIDZE (GEO), Aldiyar ANSAT (KAZ), Eltaj SAFARLI (AZE), Aditya SAMANT (IND) 6

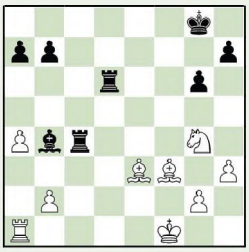
BEAUTIFUL WIN

Denis Kadric 2583
Kirill Shoshin 2278
European Individual Championship, Vrnjacka Banja 2023



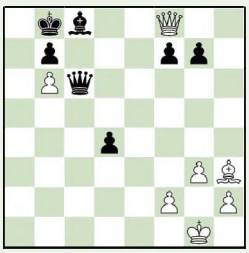
32.♗e4!! 1-0
32...♕xe4 33.♖xg7+

Yuriy Kuzubov 2616
Matthew Wadsworth 2439
European Individual Championship, Vrnjacka Banja 2023



29.♗d5+ 1-0

Max Warmerdam 2614
Olga Badelka 2428
European Individual Championship, Vrnjacka Banja 2023



47.♗f5 47.♗d7!! ♕xb6 *(47...♕xd7 48.♕a3+-)* 48.♕xc8+ ♔a7 49.♗g4+-
47...♕c1+ 48.♔g2 ♕c6+ 49.f3 d3 50.♗xd3 ♕xb6 51.♕xg7 ♕e3 52.♕c3 b5 53.♕c2 b4 54.h4 ♗e6 55.♕e2 ♕d4 56.h5 b3 57.h6 b2 58.h7 ♔c7 59.♗b1 ♕g7 60.♕e3 ♔d7 61.♕a7+ ♔d8 62.♕b8+ ♗c8 63.♗f5 1-0

MINIATURES

Ali Alper Celik 1961
Mihailo Vujic 2281
European Individual Championship, Vrnjacka Banja 2023

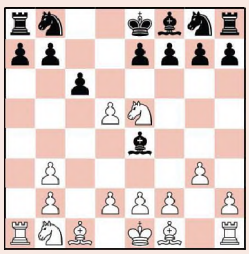
1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♘f6 3.d4 ♗g4 4.f3 ♗f5 5.c4 e6 6.dxe6 ♘c6 7.exf7+ ♔xf7 8.♗e3 ♗b4+ 9.♘c3 ♖e8 10.♔f2

10...♖xe3!! 11.♔xe3 ♗c2! 11...♘xd4 12.♔f2 ♗c5 13.♘a4 ♗c2 14.♘xc5 ♗xd1 15.♖xd1 ♕e7 16.b4 ♖e8 17.♗d3 ♕e3+ 18.♔f1 b6 19.♘e4 ♘xe4 20.♗xe4 c5 21.bxc5 ♖xe4 22.fxe4 ♕f4+ 23.♔e1 ♕xe4+ 24.♔f2 ♕c2+ 25.♔e1 bxc5 0-1 S.Vaibhav 2542 – M.Carlsen 2834, Internet 2018.

12.♕d2 ♘g4+!! 13.♔f4 ♗d6+ 14.♔xg4 ♕d7+ 15.♔h4 g5+ 16.♔h5 ♗g6+ 17.♔h6 ♕f5 0-1

Nijat Abasov 2625
Sabino Brunello 2512
European Individual Championship, Vrnjacka Banja 2023

1.c4 c6 2.♘f3 d5 3.g3 ♗g4 4.♘e5 ♗f5 5.♕b3 ♕b6 6.cxd5 ♕xb3 7.axb3 ♗e4? 7...♗xb1 8.♖xb1 cxd5=



8.dxc6! ♘xc6 8...♗xh1 9.♖xa7!! ♖xa7 10.c7+-
9.f3 ♘d4 10.♖a4 ♗xb1 11.♖xd4 f6 12.♘d3 e5 13.♖c4 ♗d6 14.♘c5 b5 15.♖c3 ♘e7 16.e4 b4 17.♖c4 ♖b8 18.d4 exd4 19.♗f4 ♗xf4 20.gxf4 1-0

Q&A 5x5

WHERE GRANDMASTERS ADVISE YOUNG PLAYERS

01 What is the advantage of someone starting to play chess at an early age? When is it best to start? And for those who might be late in learning the game, are they able to get back on track to becoming a titled player?

The earlier the better, as in a way learning chess is like learning a language and this is known to be much easier when you are young. Also the brain gets used to patterns and calculations better while it is still growing and developing. It is very difficult to become a grandmaster when starting late. There are only a few exceptions to this.

02 If there are three main departments of the game – opening, middlegame and endgame – what portion of our time should we spend on each? And what is the most important?

I would say: 20% on tactical exercises, 30% on opening preparation, 20% on endgames and the rest on general technique and middlegame strategy. But these only are guesses and most important is that you enjoy your training! For a beginner training in calculation is by far the most important. After all, chess is a game, so playing against stronger opponents and analyzing your games with them and later on your own or with a trainer is the best training.

03 From your own experience can you recall any specific type of opening position or endgame theme that an aspiring chess player should be sure to study because of its particular importance?

Rook endings, as these occur most frequently and require active play in order that many valuable half points can potentially be saved. Then again, if you want to become a grandmaster you should know everything that is in *Dvoretsky's Endgame Manual*. In the endgame the characteristics of the pieces can be seen more clearly than in messy middlegames. But, of course, constructing a suitable opening repertoire, which suits your style, is also very helpful.

04 Not everyone can be a chess world champion. But how can chess be of benefit in life and business?

Chess teaches you how to handle defeat, learn from experience and make realistic plans. Team competitions can help to develop team spirit. Endgame theory shows the value of knowledge and how it can be applied to practical situations.

05 Why would you recommend chess to youngsters? What joys may they expect to experience on this thrilling journey, in addition to those you have mentioned in your previous answer?

Chess improves your ability to concentrate and take responsibility for your own decisions. Playing in chess tournaments creates opportunities to gain many friends for life in all countries of the world – over the board or online.

GM Karsten Mueller

German vice-champion in 1997

Grandmaster since 1998

PhD in mathematics in 2002

Prolific chess author

One of the world's leading endgame experts

McFarland

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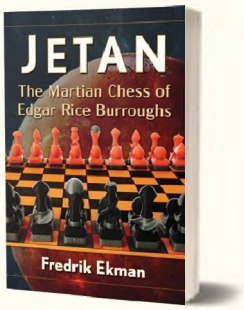

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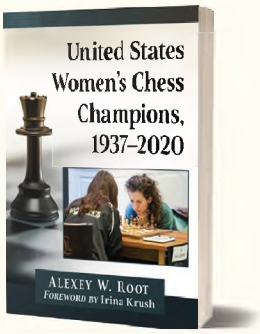

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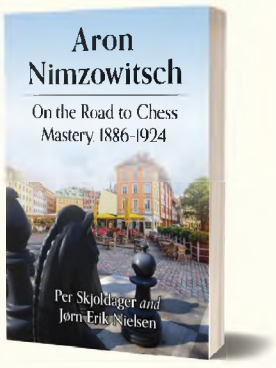

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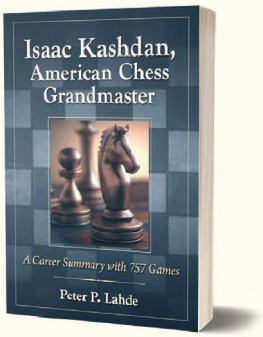

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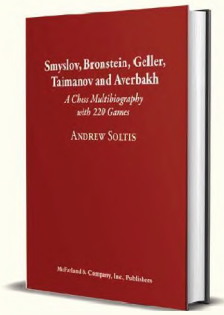

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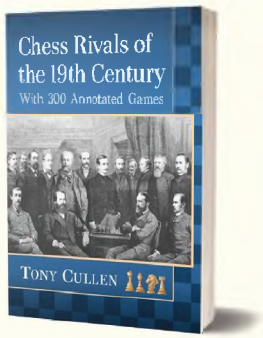

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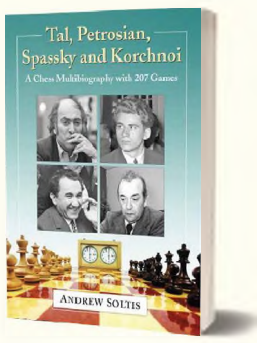

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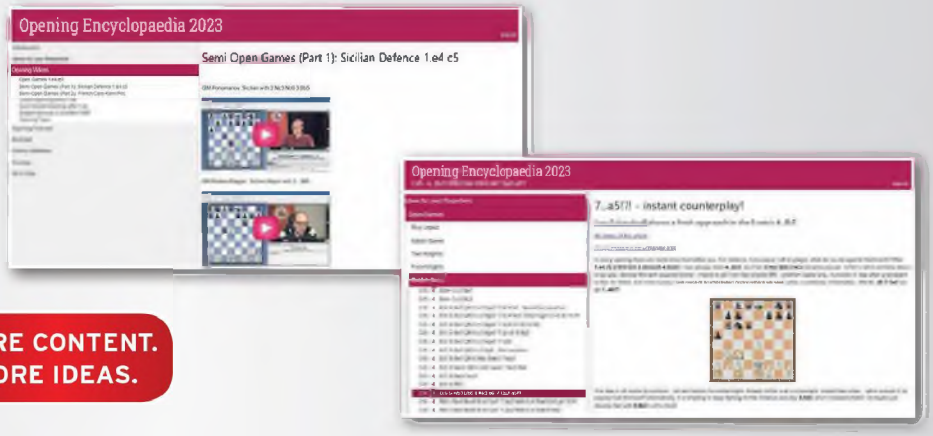
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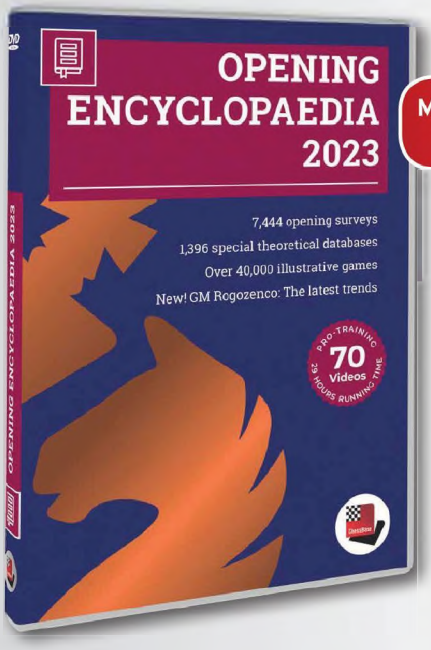

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